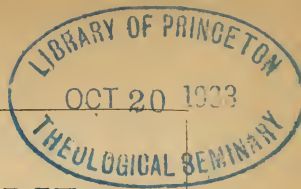






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Dewar, D.
The Holy Spirit

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THE HOLY SPIRIT:

HIS PERSONALITY,

DIVINITY, OFFICE, AND AGENCY,

IN THE

REGENERATION AND SANCTIFICATION
OF MAN.

BY

✓
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LONDON:

WARD AND CO., 27, PATERNOSTER ROW.

PREFACE.

THE infinite importance of the subject to which the following treatise relates, as forming an essential part of Christianity, will be generally admitted. In the present times, too, when semi-Pelagianism, and tenets grossly erroneous on the doctrine of Divine influence, are eagerly promulgated, and as eagerly embraced, it becomes a sacred obligation to contribute, according to the ability and opportunity which God has given, to maintain the truth.

I have briefly considered the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, as it relates to his personality, divinity, and office, in the economy of redemption; because clear and scriptural notions on these topics have an influence on our views of his operations as they relate, either to particular persons in their regeneration, implanting in them the principles of spiritual life, beginning and carrying on the work of sanctification; or, as bearing on the felicity and prosperity of the church.

The subject, it is true, is included in "the deep things of God," for the knowledge of which we are wholly dependent on Divine revelation. Mere human science, man understands by the exercise and investigation of his reason: "for the things of a man knoweth the spirit of a man that is in him: "* but the knowledge of the personality, divinity, agency, and operations of the Holy Spirit, is distant and remote, and can only be obtained from the inspired word. For "the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God." There is even a reluctance to receive the great truths of the living oracles which relate to the Holy Spirit. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* How necessary is it, then, that this subject should be studied under a profound sense of our dependence upon God, to guide us to the knowledge of the truth!

The two main objections to the inward and special operation of the Holy Spirit, which have been urged in former ages as well as in the present, are, first, that it is incompatible with the exercise of reason and free agency; and, secondly, that it tends to foster fanaticism and delusion. These and other objections I have obviated, I trust, in the following pages. At the same time, I have studiously avoided giving to this work a controversial aspect. I have done so for two reasons: first, because I conceive that, in ordinary cases, the full and faithful statement of Divine truth is the most effectual way of meeting error; and, secondly, because it appears to me that truth is more likely to be received when it is presented free from the controversial spirit, and in the practical form in which it is stated in Divine revelation.

I shall only further observe, that such, in my apprehension, is the prominent and all-important place which the doctrine relating to the Holy Spirit and his operations, holds in the system of Divine truth, that if it be disregarded, overlooked, or pushed from the foreground, where inspired teachers have left it, into the shade, we may anticipate a rapid decline of vital religion within the pale of the Christian church. “Take away the dispensation of the Spirit, and his effectual operations in all the intercourse that is between God and man; be ashamed to avow or profess the work attributed unto him in the gospel, and Christianity is plucked up by the roots.”†

Marischal College, September 2, 1847.

* 1 Cor. ii. 11 and 14.

† Owen’s Discourse concerning the Holy Spirit.

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BOOK I.

THE PERSONALITY AND DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT,
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AGENCY AND OPERATIONS.

CHAPTER I.

THE PERSONALITY AND DIVINITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

As the Father's love and wisdom are displayed in procuring salvation for us by the gift of his Son, so are they manifested in applying and in rendering personally efficacious the benefits of the Saviour's purchase by the bestowment of the Holy Spirit. The one he gave for us, and spared him not, but delivered him up to the death for us all ; the other he gives unto us, that he may work in us all the good pleasure of his goodness, and make effectual in our experience the fruits of the Saviour's obedience and sufferings. As the promise of the Redeemer formed the great theme of revelation, and the object of hope to believers, before his manifestation in the flesh, so the main promise of the New Testament regards the mission of the Holy Spirit, his grace and operation, in discharging the office assigned him in the economy of redemption.

The appellations by which the third person of the blessed Trinity is usually designated, is Spirit, and Holy Spirit. The word Spirit is intended to denote his nature and essence as God, in common with the Father and the Son. In this respect God is a Spirit, pure, immaterial, and unrestricted to place. The name, therefore, in this original acceptation, does not signify anything peculiarly characteristic of the third person, but refers to that of which each person is partaker.

But, on the other hand, this appellation is generally used in scripture in a sense peculiar to the third person, and for the purpose of distinguishing him, not only from the Father and the Son, but from every other being and attribute. The word Spirit, when thus applied to him, relates either to himself personally, or to his gifts and

operations. It has been supposed that this term has been selected for this purpose partly on the ground of its etymological signification: it originally denoted air in motion, as in the breath of living creatures, or in the wind. Hence, in a secondary acceptation, it imports the human soul, which God is said to have breathed immediately into man; and in general, what can be neither seen nor touched, what is neither material nor corporeal, but absolutely spiritual and invisible. This epithet, it is alleged, is used to designate the third person of the Trinity on account of the mode of his procession from the Father and the Son. As the breath of man continually emanates from him; so does the Spirit of the Father and the Son proceed from them by Divine emanation.

This is a profound mystery; and I shall not presume to say whether the reason thus assigned for the application of the term Spirit to the sanctifier be well founded or not. But I would venture with diffidence to state as more probable grounds of his being so called; first, the Divine perfection of his nature as absolutely spiritual, and that he accomplishes whatever the wisdom of God designs. Secondly, his operations by which he moves, quickens, and refreshes, and produces in those who are the subjects of his influence, a spiritual nature. He is also emphatically styled, the Holy Spirit, on account of the holiness of his nature, the infinite purity and rectitude of all his operations, but especially because, according to the economy of grace, the work of sanctifying believers is peculiarly his. He is often called the Spirit of God; sometimes the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of Christ, on the ground, I apprehend, of that relation which subsists between the persons of the blessed Trinity, and also to denote the order of their subsistence. He is the Spirit of God, because in a way altogether incomprehensible to us, he proceeds from him, as he does also from the Son. Had he not in this sense been the Spirit of Christ, he could not have been called his Spirit, as he often is, because he was promised by him, and sent by him, to make his work effectual to the church.

There are some who deny the personality of the Holy Ghost, and maintain that he is an attribute, or the influ-

ential power of God: while there are others, such as the Mahometans, who admit his personality, but oppose his divinity, by making him an eminent angel. Those who entertain these opinions must have erroneous views of his office in the economy of grace, and of the necessity of his influence. It will therefore be my endeavour, first, to prove that the Holy Spirit is a person; secondly, that he is a Divine Being; thirdly, to show the nature of the office which is assigned to him in the covenant of redemption.

1. I am to prove that the Holy Spirit is a person. God has been pleased to reveal himself as three distinct persons in one undivided nature and essence, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to each of whom peculiar acts and operations are ascribed. No one needs to be informed what are the properties requisite to constitute a personal subsistence; since all know that he in whom the qualities of a moral agent are inherent, understanding and will, is a person, in contra-distinction to an attribute. If, therefore, the Holy Ghost, to whom these attributes are uniformly ascribed in the scriptures, were nothing more than a quality in the Divine nature, or the power that God puts forth for the accomplishment of his purposes, we might maintain, on grounds equally good, that the Father and the Son also are mere qualities or properties. For it is impossible to show that the Father or the Son is possessed of personal subsistence in any other way than that which proves infallibly that the Holy Spirit is a living, powerful, intelligent, and Divine person. We have no other means than this of ascertaining from the works of nature whether the Deity be a principle, or a wise and designing agent; whether he possesses the capacities which constitute personality, or is an unintelligent power.

When we find in the constant tenor of scripture that the attributes, acts, and operations, by which personal agency is ascertained and demonstrated, and by which alone the personality of the Father and the Son is established, are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, are we not taught to believe, and are we not bound to admit, that he is truly a person. "If a sober, wise, and honest man," says

an eminent writer,* “should come and tell you, that in such a country where he has been, there is one who is the governor of it that discharges his office well; that he hears causes, discerns right, distributes justice, relieves the poor, comforts them that are in distress; supposing you gave him that credit which honesty, wisdom, and sobriety do deserve, would you not believe that he intended a righteous, diligent, intelligent person. The scripture informs us that the Holy Ghost rules in and over the church of God; that he discerns and judges all things, that he comforts them that are faint, strengthens them that are weak, is grieved with those who backslide, provoked by them who sin; and that he worketh, ordereth, and disposeth all, according to the counsel of his own will. Can any man, possibly, that gives credit to the testimony thus proposed, conceive any otherwise of this Spirit, but as of a holy, wise, and intelligent person.” I shall now proceed to place before you an outline of the evidence by which this important fact is confirmed.

I. The properties of personal existence are ascribed to the Holy Spirit. These are included in understanding and will. That he possesses the first of these, is clearly affirmed in the following passage: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.”† The apostle is here discoursing of those deep things of God, which absolutely surpass the full comprehension of every created being, but which he declares the Spirit of God, in consequence of his infinite understanding intimately knows. Nor is it any objection that the word search is employed, which, in reference to man, implies imperfection, and the use of means in coming to the knowledge of the particular truth sought after; for as the *effect* of searching or investigation with us is, or is

* Dr. John Owen.

† 1 Cor. ii. 9—12.

supposed to be, a more full acquaintance with the subject examined, so in condescension to human weakness the word in question is employed in scripture to denote the intuitive, profound, and accurate knowledge which is peculiar to God. Thus, the Psalmist says, in allusion to the omniscience of God, "O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me: such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it."* And God, speaking by the prophet Jeremiah, says, in reference to the same infinite knowledge, "I, the Lord, search the heart; I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways."†

Sovereign will and determination are also ascribed to him. This is clearly the case in the following passage, in which the Holy Spirit is represented as the author of all spiritual gifts, and guided in their bestowment by his own infinitely wise and righteous will. "There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit with all. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues; but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will."—1 Cor. xii. 1—8.

Another property of personal existence is power,—power to act according to understanding and will. This also is attributed to the Holy Spirit, not as an instrument through whom the power of another is exercised,—a sense in which it is ascribed to the word of God, when it is said that it is able to save our souls, and that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation,—but as the supreme efficient cause who is in himself omnipotent. To him is ascribed creation, the highest act of Divine power that

* Psalm cxxxix. 1—6.

† Jer. xvii. 10.

we can conceive. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost; through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God."*

2. The actions of personality are attributed to the Holy Spirit. He is represented as commanding, forbidding, revealing the Divine will, speaking, teaching, testifying, and bearing witness, comforting, appointing to offices in the church, dwelling in his people as his temple, renovating, sanctifying, directing, supporting, and aiding them in prayer. A few examples from scripture, illustrative of this position, will suffice; since it would be as unnecessary as it would be tedious to adduce all the passages in which actions, implying personal existence, are ascribed to the Spirit of God.

He is said to teach, not objectively by exhibiting the effects of the Divine wisdom and power, a sense in which the works of nature may be said to instruct us, by manifesting the glory of God, but actively by a real communication of knowledge. Different expressions are used in order more clearly to shew the nature, efficacy, and fruits of his teaching. "I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Instructor, to abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. When the Comforter or Instructor is come, whom I will send unto you from my Father, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth from the Father, he will testify of me. I tell you the truth; it is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Instructor will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he will not speak from himself, but will speak what he may be instructed; and he will de-

* Rom. xv. 13.

clare to you the things which are to come. He will glorify me; for he will receive of mine, and will shew it unto you.”* Now, let it be remarked, that these things are spoken of the Holy Spirit in a continued discourse, addressed by our Lord to his disciples, in which he designed to make them acquainted with the nature and properties of that Divine Instructor whom he promised to send unto them. Though nothing else had been said respecting him in scripture, I should think that every one who yields to the authority of revelation would feel himself bound to believe in the personal existence and agency of the Holy Spirit.

In the following passage, he is represented as commanding his servants to be set apart to a particular work, as furnishing them with ability for the service to which he appointed them, and as sending them forth under his special authority and direction. As they ministered unto the Lord and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, “Separate unto me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Ghost, departed.”† He is elsewhere presented to our view as prohibiting and preventing his ministering servants from pursuing the course which they had previously designed, and as marking out for them the direction which they were to follow. They were forbidden of the Holy Ghost to preach the word in Asia. After they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia; but the Spirit suffered them not.‡

I shall only further, on this particular, adduce two or three passages in which the Holy Spirit is represented as intimating his mind and will, as revealing, witnessing, and speaking. “It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord Christ.” “Whatsoever may be given you in that hour, that speak; for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying, that bonds and afflictions abide me.” “Now, the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times

* John, xvi. 7—16.

† Acts, xiii. 1.

‡ Acts, xvi. 6. 7.

some shall depart from the faith. Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The actions here attributed to the Holy Spirit are manifestly those of a person possessing infinite intelligence and volition.

3. He is represented as concerned in the dispositions and conduct entertained towards him by intelligent creatures; and as the object of the actions of men in a way which presupposes his personal existence. "Wherefore I say unto you, all manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come."* If the Holy Ghost were nothing more than the influential power of God acting by Jesus Christ, with what propriety could the Son of Man and the Holy Spirit be spoken of as two distinct persons? If he were only a quality or attribute of Deity, how could blasphemy against him be distinct from blasphemy against the Father and the Son, or, on what ground could this sin be accompanied with the highest aggravation of guilt of which man is capable? Besides, are we not commanded not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption?† Though, in the language of poetry, inanimate things are represented as rejoicing and mourning, and sympathising with various passions of human nature, every one understands that this is a mere rhetorical figure. But, in a book which makes known to us the will of God, and in that part of it too which is altogether didactic, can we believe that the Holy Spirit would be spoken of as capable of grief if he were merely a quality and not truly a person?

In accordance with the two passages just quoted are the following, in which men are said to lie to the Holy Ghost, to tempt the Spirit of the Lord, and to resist the Holy Ghost;—actions which can only refer to a person

* Matt. xii. 31, 32.

† Eph. iv. 30.

possessed of understanding and consciousness. "Peter said to Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart, to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? Why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord? Ye stiff-necked, and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye."*

4. The Holy Spirit is designated by the use of masculine pronouns. This is a circumstance which ought not to pass unnoticed, as characterising the style of the inspired volume in relation to the Spirit of God. This volume is designed to lead us to the knowledge of the truth, and its language was selected by infinite wisdom with this view. Speaking of the Spirit, it says, "He shall teach you all things: He shall testify concerning me: when He shall come, He will glorify me."† This is the perpetual style of the scriptures in reference to him.

5. The Holy Spirit is often united in the same place and order with the Father and Son, without our being told that there is any difference as to distinct personality. I shall at present omit the numerous passages in which he is the object of religious acknowledgement in parity with the Father and the Son, and shall only notice the solemn form of our initiation by baptism into covenant with God. Our Lord commanded his apostles to teach all nations, "baptising them in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost."‡ Those who deny the divinity of Christ do not admit his personality; so that, according to the views of those who maintain that the Holy Spirit is a mere quality, we are baptised in the name of two persons and of an attribute; that is, we are baptised in the name of God the Father, and of the Son, and of the Divine Power. Who does not see the glaring absurdity of such an hypothesis? We must feel that what appears to us so void of all propriety or meaning,

* Acts, v. 1—8.

† John, xiv. 26; xv. 26; xvi. 14.

‡ Math. xxviii. 19, 20.

is the device of man, and can have no place in the revelation of God.

Nor does it form the slightest objection to this to say, that things, and even persons of different nature and rank, are sometimes connected with persons in the same sentence, as when Paul commends the church to God and to the word of his grace; or, when it is said, "The people feared the Lord and the king." For our argument in support of the personality of the Holy Spirit is not deduced merely from the circumstance of his being joined with the Father and the Son, but from his being conjoined in such a way that the same name or nature and divine authority are equally applied to the three. Nor are we merely baptised into the Holy Ghost,—for persons may be said to be baptised into a doctrine when by baptism they profess their belief in it, as the Israelites who are said to have been baptised into Moses;* but we are said to be baptised into the name of the Holy Spirit, as well as into the name of the Father and the Son. Does not this clearly imply, that we own the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, to be alike the object of faith and obedience, that we submit to their authority as the same, and that we equally take the profession of their name upon us? If this does not unequivocally prove the personality of the Holy Spirit, whom, at our very entrance into the Christian church, we are required by Divine authority to believe in, to trust, fear, love, honour, and worship, in common with the Father and the Son;—if his personality is not here fully established, by what means, or by what terms, could this fundamental fact be more clearly attested and confirmed?

6. Finally, the contrary supposition, namely, that the Holy Spirit is a quality or attribute, and not a person, renders much of the language of scripture unintelligible and unmeaning. This is abundantly obvious, from what has already been advanced. Nor can any one fail to observe it who will take the trouble to substitute in a few of those passages where the epithet, Holy Spirit, occurs, the word power. For example: "God anointed Jesus

* 1 Cor. x. i.

with the Holy Ghost and with power," may be read, according to this hypothesis, God anointed Jesus with the power of God, and with power.

If no sober-minded man could be chargeable with such a mode of writing as this, how can it be supposed, without impiety, that the infinitely wise God used it in conveying a revelation of his will to his intelligent creatures?

To the arguments from scripture, by which, as it appears to me, I have proved the personality of the Holy Spirit, two objections are urged: first, that personal properties are often in scripture attributed to qualities and other objects which have no conscious existence, and that in regard to the Holy Spirit they are to be considered as merely instances of the rhetorical figure personification: and, secondly, that there are some things ascribed to the Spirit which do not belong to a person, and which, in a literal acceptation, cannot be affirmed respecting him.

With regard to the first objection, we readily admit, what every reader of the sacred volume must know, that in those parts of it which are written in poetical diction, metaphorical language is often used. Inanimate objects are represented as possessing the properties of living persons—of feeling, acting, seeing, hearing, rejoicing, and mourning. Wisdom, charity, righteousness, mercy, sin, death, the grave, heaven, earth, and hell, are in this way personified, and are spoken of as if they acted like conscious agents. But who ever has been misled by this adorned and impassioned style? To render this impossible, figures occur only occasionally in scripture, while the direct description of those things to which they refer, are given in many other places, and amply expound the import of the figurative language.

With regard to the Holy Spirit, the attributing of personal properties, is the constant style of the inspired writers. It abounds in the plainest parts of scripture, and in connexions utterly irreconcilable with the notion of *prosopopœia*. Not only do the expressions uniformly used in reference to him declare him to be a person; but in no part of the Bible is there an allusion to him, which,

when fairly interpreted, is at variance with those declarations, or inconsistent with his personal existence.

This leads me to notice the second objection to our arguments, namely, that there are in scripture some things ascribed to the Holy Spirit which do not belong to a person. Thus, he is said to be poured out, to be shed abroad; and we are said to be anointed and baptised with the Spirit. These expressions, it is acknowledged, are figurative; and they must be so regarded even by those who maintain that the Holy Spirit is an attribute or quality. For we can no more say that the power of God is poured out, or shed abroad, than we can literally use these terms in regard to a person. I understand such expressions as referring—and referring, too, with the utmost force and propriety—to the communication of his influences. Their precise meaning I shall afterwards have an opportunity of explaining. In the mean time I may remark, that their beauty and appositeness are felt by all. “He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass; as showers that water the earth.” “I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.”

These expressions come under that figure of speech which rhetoricians style metonymy—a figure in which some quality or property of a person is denoted by the name of the person to whom it belongs. Thus, believers are said to have received Christ Jesus the Lord, to walk in him, to be rooted and built up in him; to have Christ formed in them; to have put on Christ. But who ever supposed that because these, and such like expressions, cannot be understood of Christ personally, therefore he can possess no personal existence? Equally futile is the objection founded on the use of this figure of speech against the personality of the Holy Spirit.

II. I now proceed very briefly to prove that the Holy Spirit is a Divine person, and is truly God. It is the less necessary to say much on this head, since in proving his personality, we have had occasion to notice, in the passages quoted, that acts and operations are ascribed to him which clearly establish his Divine nature.

1. The names of God are given to him. When Ananias is said to lie to the Holy Ghost, it is added, by way of explanation, concerning the person intended, "Thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."* We find, in several instances, that what is spoken of God, in one part of scripture, is in another applied to the Holy Ghost; from which circumstance we are surely warranted to infer that the Holy Ghost is God. Thus God promised, "I will set my tabernacle among you; and I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be my people." The apostle Paul informs us in what way this promise is fulfilled: "Ye," says he, addressing believers, "are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." "Know you not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you."† Again, the words of Isaiah, "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord? or, being his counsellor, hath taught him?" are rendered by the apostle, "Who hath known the mind of the Lord, and who has been his Counsellor?"‡ In like manner, we find that the Divine Being whom the disciples, as mentioned in the fourth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, address, when they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, "Lord, thou art God, who hast made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is; who, by the mouth of thy servant David, hast said, Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?" We find that he who is here addressed as God, the Lord, the Creator of all things, is styled by the apostle Peter (Acts i. 16) the Holy Ghost. We might also refer to Isaiah vi. compared with John xii. 41.

2. The attributes of God are ascribed to him. Eternity; for he is called the eternal Spirit. Omnipresence; for it is asked, "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" Omniscience; for it is said that the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God. Holiness; for he is usually and emphatically called the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of holiness. Truth; for he is designated the

* Acts, v.

† 1 Cor. vi. 19.

‡ Rom. xi. 3.

Spirit of Truth. Goodness; for he is spoken of as "Thy good Spirit: thy Spirit is good." Power and Divine sovereignty; for to him is ascribed, as the personal Author, the uncontrolled distribution of all miraculous gifts. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will. Prescience, or the knowledge of futurity. Of this the fact is an unequivocal attestation that it was by his inspiration that the prophets make known future events. "For the prophecy came not, in old time, by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."*

3. The actions of God are ascribed to the Holy Ghost. The work of creating and upholding all things is distinctly attributed to him. By his Spirit he garnished the heavens. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit," says the Psalmist, "they are created; and thou renewest the face of the earth." Working of miracles, which is a suspension of the laws of nature, and which, consequently, is an act peculiar to God, is uniformly ascribed to him. He is also represented as the Author of life. It is the Spirit that quickeneth. Christ also hath once suffered for sins, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit. He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit, that dwelleth in you. I need not say that regeneration and sanctification are operations peculiar to God; but that they are so uniformly ascribed to the Holy Spirit, that he is often designated the Sanctifier. God hath, from the beginning, chosen you through sanctification of the Spirit.

4. The Holy Spirit is joined with the Father and the Son, as the object of Divine honour and worship. This sufficiently appears from the words of the commission given by our Lord to his apostles, on which I have already commented, and in which he commands them to baptise in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. That baptism is an act of religious dedication, and consequently includes those affections which constitute worship, is clear from a consideration of the

* 1 Pet. i. 21.

nature and end of this institution. But the Holy Spirit is the object of this dedication in common with the Father and Son. This I maintain, as I formerly hinted, not on the ground merely of his name being associated with theirs in the same sentence,—a circumstance which, had we not been required by other considerations, to understand an equality of power and authority, of rank and of nature, in the case supposed, might not have entitled us to this conclusion,—but because we are said to be baptised into the name of the Holy Spirit; an expression which relates not to his influence, but to his personal subsistence, and which is intended to point out an absolute equality as the object of Divine honour and worship. “That the Spirit,” as a foreign divine has remarked, “is put in the same degree of dignity as the Father and the Son, so that he is entitled to the same religious honour, follows from the institution of baptism, in which we are dedicated to the name of the Holy Spirit, as an object of worship and confession. So that the very first entrance into the Christian religion shews, that the Holy Spirit is not a created being, but is God, equal with the Father and the Son.

To the same effect is the prayer of the apostle John in the book of the Revelation. John, to the seven churches which are in Asia: “grace be unto you, and peace from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness.” The expression, the seven spirits which are before his throne, is evidently an emblematical designation of the Holy Spirit, intended to denote his infinite knowledge and all-sufficiency.

“It is well known that, in the oriental style, the perfection of any quality is expressed by the application of the number seven; a figure probably derived from the history of the creation, the division of time into weeks, and the primeval honour of the Sabbath day. Thus, the extremity of distress is denoted by seven troubles; the most complete refining of metals is called a being purified seven times; a character of consummate wickedness is represented by an enumeration of seven vices, or the

inhabitation of seven evil spirits; the highest measure of accomplishment is signified by seven men that can render a reason; perfect excellence of wisdom, by a palace with seven pillars; and the omniscience of God, by seven eyes and seven lamps. So also, still more remarkably, in this book of mystical visions, the perfection of the Divine government, in different parts of its administration, is described by the symbolical agency of seven angels, seven seals, seven thunders, seven trumpets, seven phials, seven plagues; and the perfection of power and wisdom in Christ, as exercised in the protection and government of his church, is represented by "seven horns and seven eyes."

Upon this ground, I conceive that the principles of rational interpretation authorise our coinciding with those interpreters who understand by the expression, "the seven spirits which are before the throne, that one Divine person who is called in scripture the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit of God. This expression, according to the idiom just explained, and of whose signification we have such abundant proofs, conveys to us the representation of this heavenly agent, in his own original and infinite perfection, in the consummate wisdom of his operations, and in the gracious munificence of his gifts. The symbolical position of this part of the imagery, the seven spirits being before or in front of the throne, may be conceived to denote universal inspection and readiness for action. It is true that the same expression is afterwards applied to the worshipping saints; but the difference of the subject may authorise a different conception of the allusion."*

The immediate allusion, perhaps, is to the seven lamps of the golden candlestick in the tabernacle; this is rendered probable by the expression in the fourth chapter,— "There were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven spirits of God." The Holy Spirit, the possessor of all perfection, is here invoked with the Father and the Son, and is equally adored as the author of grace and peace; the greatest blessings which God can bestow, or we receive.

* Smith's Scrip. Test. vol. ii. pp. 557, 558.

“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,” says the apostle Paul, “and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all.” In this prayer or blessing, the Holy Spirit is worshipped equally with the Father and the Son, as the author of spiritual blessings; and the benefit especially implored, namely communion or fellowship, implies that he is capable of being every where to convey life and happiness, and, consequently, that he is omnipresent and is truly God.

I trust I have now succeeded in proving the proper Divinity of the Holy Spirit, a doctrine which, as it is fundamental in the Christian religion, furnishes a solid foundation for thankfulness and joy.

CHAPTER II.

THE OFFICE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT: HIS WORK WITH
RESPECT TO THE HUMAN NATURE OF CHRIST; AND
ON THE MEMBERS OF HIS MYSTICAL BODY.

HAVING proved that the Holy Spirit is a person,—that he is a Divine person,—that is, that he is truly God: I now proceed to the consideration of his office and work in the economy of human redemption. In entering on this part of the subject, I am led to inquire into the nature of his work with respect to the human nature of Christ, the glorious Head of that body of which all regenerated persons are members.

I. The body of Christ was formed in the womb of the virgin by the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit. The immediate efficiency in this peculiar work proceeded from Him. "That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost." The angel answered, and said unto her, "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." It is true, the Father is said to have prepared a body for the Redeemer: but this he did, not by actually forming it, but by designating him to it in the eternal counsel, and by authoritatively disposing of all things for his assumption of human nature. This nature, which was immediately prepared by the miraculous power of the Holy Ghost, the Son of God voluntarily assumed at the appointed period. The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself partook of the same. His assuming the human nature into personal union with himself was an act of ineffable love and condescension: and into this close union with himself it

was taken the moment of its formation, so that it had at no time an individual subsistence in and by itself. It was created, as to its essence, instantaneously, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

In consequence of the miraculous creation of the body of Christ, it was fitted to be united to his soul which was perfectly holy. His human nature was thus not only free from that hereditary depravity from which no mere man has ever been exempted, but it had no disposition or tendency to the slightest deviation from the most perfect holiness. It was, therefore, natural for him to exercise fully every grace, and every virtue. The infirmities which he took on him were not those which arise from the depravity of our constitution, but such as are inseparable from flesh and blood, namely, the susceptibility of grief and sorrow, of hunger, thirst, weariness, and pain. He was capable of experiencing these feelings as he was man; but in this capacity there was nothing that had the least alliance to sin. His nature having been miraculously created, and not begotten by natural generation, derived no taint of corruption from Adam. He was absolutely innocent and spotless, as was the first man in the day on which he was created.

He was not only free from all sin, but he was plentifully endowed with all grace. The Holy Spirit in the instant of his creation rested upon him: and there were given to him at that moment all the graces, as to their kind, which he afterwards exercised. The Father gave him not the Spirit by measure. This extraordinary plenitude of Divine influence was conveyed to him at his incarnation, agreeably to the declaration of the prophet,—“There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord.”

This is perfectly consistent with the progressive advancement in wisdom, as in stature, which the scriptures ascribe to Christ. For, as his Divine nature was not to

him in place of a soul,—and as the immaterial and rational mind was in him even as it is in us, the immediate principle of his moral operations,—it is obvious, that there must have been an increase in him as in other men, in the expansion and exercise of the faculties and powers of the soul. In connexion with this progressive expansion of intellectual faculties, there was a progressive development of moral excellencies. “The child grew, and waxed strong in Spirit; and the favour of God was with him: he increased in wisdom, and in stature, and in favour with God and men.” This progressive advancement is not inconsistent with the most perfect holiness, but is a property essentially belonging to a finite nature: and the “union of the Divine nature and the human in the person of the Messiah does not involve the communication of omniscience to his human mind, any more than of omnipresence, unchangeableness, or eternity. All the knowledge which his offices required, or to the use of which his commission extended, he unquestionably enjoyed; but beyond this sphere, there is an indefinite field for the acquisition of new knowledge, as well as of higher felicity, even in his glorified state.”

The miraculous conception of Christ was proper, in the first place, in order to distinguish him from all other men, and to mark him out as possessed of superior excellency and dignity. If the first Adam was produced by the immediate power of God, it was meet that the Messiah, the second Adam, the new Head of the human race, should have been formed by the direct act of the Creator. But,

In the second place, the miraculous conception of Christ by the Holy Spirit was absolutely necessary, in order that the Saviour of sinful men might himself be free from corruption. The fact is established by universal experience, that all human beings who are born into the world in the ordinary and common course of nature, are depraved and sinful. But such an High Priest was necessary for us, who was inherently and absolutely holy, guiltless, spotless, and separated from sinners. It was only a Saviour who was thus morally perfect who was capable of saving men from sin. To secure this moral per-

fection, the human nature of the Holy One of God was miraculously created by an immediate act of the Holy Spirit. He thus came into the world pure as was Adam when he first proceeded from the hand of God: and he was thus adopted by his inherent and immaculate holiness to be an habitation of the Holy Ghost. Human nature, as he assumed it, was absolutely holy,—holy, not merely as has been alleged, in consequence of the extraordinary indwelling of the Holy Spirit,—holy, not merely because of the union of the Divine nature with the human, but perfectly holy in itself, and altogether free from the slightest taint of depravity. If this had not been the case, why was a miraculous interposition necessary to prepare a body for him? If by his holiness had been intended merely that he was sanctified from the womb by the Holy Spirit, why was a supernatural agency requisite to his formation? It was the design of God, by this deviation from the laws which he himself has established, to secure the perfect purity of the human nature of Christ. It was declared that this was the end which was to be attained by his miraculous conception: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore, also, that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God.”

II. Another part of the work of the Holy Spirit in regard to Christ was to anoint him with those extraordinary gifts and powers which were necessary to the discharge of his office on earth. To this our Lord referred when, in the synagogue of Nazareth, he quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah,—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison unto them that are bound.”

The priests, prophets, and princes of Israel were solemnly designated to their respective offices by the anointing with oil; and as the Saviour was to unite these offices in himself, in accomplishing the purposes of his love, he also was consecrated to his work by the shedding forth of those Divine influences of which the sacred oil

was only emblematical. Upon all his precursors in the work of ministering to the church, the Spirit of the Lord did rest; they spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; but it was reserved for him in his human nature to be pre-eminently endued with his richest gifts. In allusion to this high pre-eminence, the Psalmist, addressing him, says, "God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows;" and John the Baptist, in language less metaphorical, teaches us that God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him, but hath given all things into his hand. By these influences and miraculous powers, he was visibly and solemnly inaugurated into the full exercise of his mediatorial ministry, at his baptism, when the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him; and a voice from heaven was heard, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

This was the visible pledge of his having been called of God to the exercise of his office. He was thus sealed of the Father as his Messenger; and in consequence of this testimony publicly borne to him, all were required to own him as the Messiah. From this time, he gave himself up to that great work which he had undertaken to perform. Being full of the Holy Ghost, he had all the Divine influences and gifts which his human nature was capable of receiving. It pleased the Father that in him all fullness should dwell, that he in all things might have the pre-eminence. By this Divine fullness, he wrought those mighty and miraculous works which attested his mission: he subdued the elements, raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, and feet to the lame: and by these works of the Father, which he wrought by the power of the Spirit, was it proved that he was the Son of God. He thus fully and infallibly revealed the will of God in regard to the salvation of sinful men; and pointed to himself as the only and the adequate way of access to God. He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hands.

III. The Holy Spirit directed, comforted, and supported the Saviour during the whole course of his ministry. There are several instances recorded in which this Divine direction and support were peculiarly given. We read, Luke iv. 1, that "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost, returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness." Under the powerful impression and guidance of the Spirit, he went forth into the wilderness as the surety and deliverer of his people, against that great adversary who had prevailed against Adam, and who had led captive at his will so many of his posterity. This adversary must have known that the Mighty One, the seed of the woman, would ultimately be victorious; but notwithstanding this knowledge, he assaulted him from the malignant hope of either gaining an advantage, or, of inflicting suffering. It would appear that he tempted the Holy One of God during the whole of the forty days of his abode in the wilderness. At the termination of this period, Jesus hungered; and the tempter artfully suggested a temptation addressed to this instinctive desire of human nature: "he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread." This plausible temptation, as well as those which in succession followed it, the Saviour repelled; and that enemy whose works he came to destroy, being confounded, retired from him for a season. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he was successful in this conflict; and that those promises were fulfilled which the Father had made in the covenant of redemption. "The enemy shall not exact upon him; nor the son of wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague them that hate him. But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted."

The extraordinary direction and support which were given to the Saviour, by the Holy Spirit, during the temptation in the wilderness, were continued to him till the close of his ministry. The graces of the Spirit he exercised most perfectly during his life, and when he offered himself without spot unto God, his soul was filled with compassion to mankind; with love to his people whom

he came to seek and to save ; and animated by this holy affection, he endured the cross, and despised the shame. He felt, at the same time, the most ardent concern for the glory of God ; for the manifestation of his holiness, righteousness, and justice ; and for the exercise of his love and mercy in the salvation and happiness of sinful men. He also submitted with entire delight to the will of God, even when this Divine will required him to suffer : he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, the death of the cross. These, and all other graces, were in their fullest exercise through that extraordinary plenitude of the Spirit which he always enjoyed : and it was these that rendered the sacrifice which he offered well pleasing to God.

IV. The resurrection of Christ is ascribed to the efficiency of the Holy Spirit. It is indeed assigned to each person in the Trinity. It is ascribed to the Father, on account of his authority, in removing the sentence of his law when he was satisfied, and in acquitting from its charge the Surety of sinners : to the Son, who had in himself power to lay down his life, and power to take it again ; and who, after a season, resumed that life which he did lay down. But the work of uniting the soul and body of Christ is, as to its efficiency, ascribed to the Holy Spirit. "He was put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." It was doubtless by the Holy Spirit that the human nature of Christ was glorified, as it now is in those heavens in which it is received until the time when all things shall be fulfilled.

I shall advert to an objection which has been advanced by Socinians against the doctrine which has just been stated. It has been said, if the Divine nature be united to the human in the person of Jesus Christ, inseparably and undividedly united in the person of the Son of God, what need was there for the operations of the Holy Spirit? Could not this Divine person himself perform all that was requisite for the forming, supporting, and preserving, of his human nature? Is it not as incomprehensible as it is unnecessary, to suppose that the agency of the Holy Ghost should interpose, in the same person, between the one nature and the other.

This is certainly one of the deep things of God which is beyond the reach of the human faculties, and discussion concerning which ought to be approached with the deepest reverence. Under this impression, I would suggest some considerations which, I trust, will satisfactorily remove this seeming difficulty. I observe,

1. That while the Divine and human natures were united in the person of the Son of God, there was no transfusion of the properties of the one into the other. The attributes of Divinity were not given to humanity, nor were the properties of the human nature given to the Divinity. The human nature, though inconceivably advanced in the person of Christ, is not the subject of the properties peculiarly and essentially belonging to God.

2. As it is the peculiar work and office of the Holy Spirit to produce, as the efficient cause, all external operations connected with the great plan of human redemption, was there not an evident fitness in the Father's fulfilling the promises which he had made to the Son, by giving him the Holy Spirit, without measure? In this way, he had union to the man Christ Jesus; and gave to him the Divine wisdom, strength, and success, which he had promised to him in the covenant of redemption. The Spirit, thus communicated, was the Spirit of the Son as well as of the Father; proceeding from both, and fulfilling, by his operations, the will and purpose of both.

3. There is in every act of one of the persons in the adorable Trinity, the entire concurrence of the others. The nature of God is one, and indivisible. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are the same in substance, equal in power and in glory. The efficient power employed in the production of all the operations of nature and of grace, is the power of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and is essentially the same in each person. "As if it were possible," as Dr. Owen remarks, "that three men might see by the same eye, the act of seeing would be but one, and it would be equally the act of all three. But the things we insist on are ascribed eminently to the Holy Ghost, on the account of the order of his subsistence in the holy Trinity, as he is the Spirit of the Father and the

Son; whence, in every Divine act, the authority of the Father, the love and wisdom of the Son, with the immediate efficacy and power of the Holy Ghost, are to be considered.*

4. There was an obvious fitness that the Holy Spirit should have been given to the human nature of Christ without measure, since it is by the communication of his Spirit to his people that they are united to him. The Spirit that rested on the Head, in the days of his humiliation, and by whom he was refreshed and supported, dwells in every believer, the source of light, life, and holiness, and is in him a well of water, springing up unto life everlasting.

We are now to consider the work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of redemption, with respect to the souls of men. This is a subject of infinite importance; as it pervades the whole of Divine revelation, and is essentially connected with the efficacy of the gospel in restoring fallen men to holiness and to happiness. For, the two great means which God designed for saving sinners are, the gift of his Son for them, and the communication of his Spirit to them. The Father manifested his grace, love, and wisdom, in the glorious plan: the Son, his condescension and kindness in undertaking the work of human redemption; and the Holy Spirit continues to show his compassion and power in the effectual application of it to the souls of men. The work of Christ performed for us, by his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; and the work of the Holy Spirit accomplished in us, form the leading themes of the scriptures. To these, the chief of the doctrines and promises of the gospel may be referred: and, as the promise of the Redeemer was the principal object of the faith and hope of believers under the Old Testament; so, the promise of the copious effusion of the Spirit is the great subject of the gospel dispensation. The great importance of this doctrine appears from the following considerations.

1. When our Lord was about to depart into heaven, he promised to his disciples to send the Holy Spirit to

* Owen's Works, vol. ii. p. 180.

supply his absence. It was to this source of consolation he directed them under the sorrow which oppressed their hearts; assuring them that this bequest would amply compensate for his removal. "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you. I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he shall show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and he shall shew it unto you."

2. The great importance of the office and work of the Spirit in the economy of redemption is shewn by this—that the gospel dispensation is styled the ministration of the Spirit. This surely implies that the ministry of the gospel owes its efficacy to Divine influence—that the sacred word, whether read or preached, produces saving impression and effect, only by power from above,—and that while Paul may plant, and Apollos water, the increase can come from God only. Of the truth of this the evidence is ample: and while this proves the value of the doctrine concerning the person and operations of the Spirit, and the prominent place which it holds in the Divine system, it ought to teach all who engage in the Christian ministry, their dependence upon God for ability and success. They not only owe their natural talents and acquired endowments to him;—not only are the virtues and graces by which they are fitted for the service of the gospel, his gift, but their usefulness, in the discharge of all the duties of the pastoral office, is to be ascribed to his effectual blessing.

3. The peculiar importance of the doctrine concerning the person and work of the Holy Spirit appears from the fact, that the only unpardonable sin under the gospel, is the sin against the Holy Ghost. What the particular nature of this sin is, it is foreign to our present purpose to inquire: but the testimony of our Lord assures us that its guilt is irremissible, and its consequences irretrievable. "All sins shall be forgiven unto the sons

of men, and blasphemies wherewith soever they shall blaspheme; but he that shall blaspheme against the Holy Ghost hath never forgiveness:—it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, nor in the world to come.” Hence the diligence, tenderness, and holy reverence, with which we should inquire into declarations of scripture concerning that Divine Spirit and his operations, by whose grace sinful man is renovated and fitted for another and a better world.

With regard to the ordinary influences of the Spirit, which abide with the church in all ages, there are three views given us in scripture. First, they are represented as a blessing to be sought, and to be obtained by prayer. “If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him? If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not.” The passages are numerous in which men are taught to pray for Divine influence, and in which the Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask it. In this arrangement, God appears in the character of a gracious Sovereign, who, in infinite mercy, is ready to bestow the greatest blessings, contrary to the deserts of men. These form a boon, not of justice; for man, without them, possesses all that is requisite to render him responsible, and to make him inexcusable, should he persist in sin. He has, without the Spirit, the capacity of loving God; and he is provided with all the means and the motives of doing so. He has, however guilty, wretched, and miserable, a way of escape opened up to him from condemnation, and from all the consequences of sin: and, surely, his obduracy in declining to avail himself of this Divinely appointed method of deliverance, can give him no title to another gratuitous and compassionate interposition on his behalf. Yet, such is the kindness of God, that he has promised all this to his ungrateful and rebellious creatures; and he has commanded him to supplicate the fulfilment of this promise,—“Every one that asketh receiveth, every one that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”

Nor is the kindness of this promised ministration of

the Spirit less real, that many decline even to ask it. That men will not seek it, and importunately pray for it, is a fact well known to God. But is his pity to be restrained, and his mercy hid from the miserable, because they are obdurate, and bent upon their own destruction? Is he to withhold even the manifestation of the benignity of his nature, because it will fail to gain the love and the confidence of the human heart? "Let us suppose, for example, that a poor wretch, ready to perish with hunger, lies near my door. My first impulse, if I make any pretensions to compassion, is to offer him food. I am given to understand, however, upon authority which I cannot question, that if I prepare food for him, and invite him into my house to partake of it, he will never come, there being a stubbornness about him, or perhaps a personal dislike to me, which will prevail even over the force of hunger. What course do I then adopt? Do I shut up my bowels of compassion against him, and close my door, and pass him by indifferent to his wretchedness? Far from it: I rather go to him, and say, 'Well, I know your obstinacy; but still I am willing to feed you. Whenever you choose to go to my house, you will find an abundant supply.'* What have I done in this case that is improper or unreasonable?"

Secondly, the influences of the Holy Spirit are represented as communicated sometimes unsought. They are given without solicitation on the part of man. In this case, the benefit conferred is expressive of the rich grace and infinite kindness of God. The sinner when he sought not God is made partaker of the greatest blessing—a blessing by which he is fitted for the enjoyment of eternal good. Its possession is known by the fruits of repentance and conversion. Its bestowment is designed to magnify the grace and the goodness of God;—that no flesh should glory in his presence. "At that time Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, 'Father, I thank thee that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight.'"

Thirdly, the bestowment of the Holy Spirit is alto-

* Hinton on the Holy Spirit.

gether of rich and sovereign grace. It is above and beyond the established order of things. It is the manifestation and the effect of that great love wherewith God hath loved us, even when we were dead in sins. Hence the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace. His operations in the souls of man are illustrative of grace to the undeserving, the spiritually poor, the wretched, the blind, and the naked. He shows that he will have mercy upon whom he will have mercy.

Let it be carefully remembered that we have no claim for the bestowment of the Holy Spirit; that he is given solely from the good pleasure of God; and that though the gift were entirely withheld, God would be still righteous and holy in his procedure.

CHAPTER III.

ON THE OFFICE AND WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT :
HE GLORIFIES CHRIST.

WE are now to proceed to the consideration of the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of redemption. Scripture represents the plan of redeeming mercy as originating in the counsel, will, and grace of the Father, to whose love, as the fountain, it teaches us to trace its manifold blessings; as accomplished by the voluntary obedience and death of the Son, whom all men are commanded to honour even as they honour the Father, and as actually and personally applied by the Holy Spirit, who, together with the Father and the Son, one God, is to be adored and worshipped. As it was the great object of the Saviour in his incarnation, humiliation, and sufferings, to glorify God, and to finish the work which he had given him to do; so does it form a leading design of the Holy Spirit in his varied operations to honour and glorify Christ. "He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." In these words of our Lord, the office and work assigned to him in the new covenant are clearly though briefly described. Before inquiring into what is included in the expressions, or attempting to point out the manner in which the Holy Spirit accomplishes the undertaking to which they relate, we shall make some explanatory observations on some of the terms used in scripture to denote the communication of this Divine Person and his influences.

Here we are to remember the order in which each person in the adorable trinity operates, and the work which is respectively assigned to each in the economy of grace. To the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, considered as one

God, the same in nature, counsel, and design, the same Divine works are ascribed. As the Divine nature is one, and cannot be divided, whatever is done by this nature is performed absolutely by God. But, as I have already hinted, the scripture represents each person as acting in a particular manner, and as performing certain specified operations, in the scheme of human redemption. There is an order in their work as well as in their subsistence. Though they are all equal, each has his appropriated work. As the Father is the fountain of Deity, to use an expression common with divines, so is he the source of all operation. All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ. The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he sees the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these also doth the Son likewise. The Father displayed his love, wisdom, and justice, in the wonderful plan of redeeming mercy, and in appointing his own Son to be the Mediator; the Son in consenting, and in voluntarily undertaking to do the work assigned him, showed the highest possible love and obedience; and the Holy Spirit, in coming down to apply the blessings of the Saviour's mediation, has manifested the greatest grace and condescension.

Accordingly, the Holy Spirit is said to be given by God, to be sent, to be poured out, and to be put on us by him; expressions which intimate authority and kindness on the part of the bestower; and a cordial co-operation on the part of the person gifted in the work of redemption. The act of giving the Spirit in regard to God has its corresponding act of receiving with respect to us. The Father is likewise said to send the Holy Ghost in the name of Christ; which is to be understood, not as signifying a local motion, which cannot be affirmed concerning a Divine person, but the accomplishment of that special work to which he is appointed. The Spirit is also said to be poured out; a metaphor which denotes copiousness, in allusion to the overflowing water of a living spring. This expression often occurs in the writings of the prophets, in reference to the communication of Divine influence. "I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground; I will

pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring." In order to denote the effectual bestowment of this blessing, God is said to put his Spirit upon men, and pre-eminently upon the Messiah.

On the other hand, the Holy Spirit is represented as voluntarily complying with these acts: "The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." He is also said to come to, to rest, and dwell in the persons to whom he is sent;—expressions which imply that he abides with delight and complacency, to discharge his gracious office in sanctifying and consoling the objects of redeeming love and mercy.

This office chiefly consists in glorifying Christ. This he did, by preparing the way for his coming; by resting upon him in his gifts and graces, in his state of humiliation; and by representing his person, and successfully vindicating his cause, after his ascension.

The Holy Spirit glorified Christ by preparing the way for his manifestation in the flesh. Though the gospel dispensation is peculiarly the ministration of the Spirit, his gifts and influences were communicated from the beginning. It has been by his agency that ever since the entrance of sin, souls have been enlightened, renewed, sanctified, and prepared for eternal happiness. His extraordinary operations were in many respects displayed progressively as the discovery of the plan of redeeming mercy advanced; and in admirable adaptation to the gradual development of this Divine scheme. By the gift of prophecy, conveyed to individuals in the church from age to age, he foretold the Redeemer in his character and sufferings, kingdom and glory; while, at the same time, he instituted those typical signs to be observed in the worship of God, which served to expound and to impress prophecy, and to direct the faith and expectation of the people to the mighty Deliverer. "They received the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls. Of which salvation the prophets have inquired, and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, did signify, when it testified before hand the sufferings of Christ, and the

glory that should follow : for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”*

This Divine Agent inspired, and preserved in writing, the penmen of the Old Testament, as he afterwards performed the same offices in regard to those of the New. Without entering here on the subject of inspiration, I must not omit to remark, in connection with the work of the Holy Spirit, that from him proceeded the Divine truth which the writers, as instruments, communicated ; that by him the very words in which they conveyed it were suggested to their minds ; and that in uttering, or, in writing them, they were so far guided as to be infallibly preserved from error.

Nor were miraculous works,—those mighty signs and wonders by which he attested the commission of his servants,—then uncommon. The Mosaic economy was introduced and established by a frequent suspension of the laws of nature ; and the preservation of Israel in Canaan, in the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed, was a continued miraculous interposition. These works were performed by the Holy Spirit ; the persons who were employed as instruments, owning that it was not by any quality or power inherent in them they were accomplished, but by the hand or finger of God.

But it was upon Christ himself, the Surety and Head of the new covenant, that the Holy Spirit, in his extraordinary gifts and graces, eminently rested. Agreeably to the prediction, the Spirit of the Lord came upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. As the miraculous formation and sanctification of his human nature are ascribed to the Holy Spirit, so are those extraordinary powers which were necessary for the exercise and discharge of his office. At his inauguration, “the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and rested on him ; and, lo, a voice came from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” From this period, he began to preach the doc-

* 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

trines of the kingdom of God with such power as to make his audience wonder at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. He himself assigned the cause of the power that attended him when he said, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised."* It was by the Holy Spirit, I conceive, that those promises were fulfilled which the Father made to the Son, of direction, comfort, and support, in the course of his ministry, obedience, and sufferings: and that when offering himself a sacrifice to God, he continued to exercise those graces which gave fragrancy to his oblation.

It was, however, after the Saviour's ascension that the Holy Spirit eminently discharged the office assigned to him by glorifying Christ. It was meet that the work which the Redeemer had finished should be thus peculiarly honoured. If the malediction which man had incurred chiefly consisted in the withdrawing of God's gracious presence, and the influences of his Spirit; the end of Christ's sacrifice was to remove this curse, and lay a foundation, on which consistently with the honour and majesty of the Divine character and government, those great blessings might be restored. The Saviour on his entrance into glory received the fulness of the Spirit; and the right of conveying his influence is so annexed to his office, that he may carry into effect all its designs, in giving life and righteousness to whom he will. It was in every view proper that he who had opened up a way for the forgiveness of sins, should be constituted the medium through whom all communications between heaven and earth are to pass; and that it should manifestly appear to be in honour of his work, and subsequent to his exaltation, that the gifts and graces of the Spirit were copiously bestowed. This was the attestation of Heaven to the efficacy of his oblation, and a perpetual memorial of the complacency with which the Father

* Luke iv. 26.

regards his work. It was, accordingly, while the disciples tarried at Jerusalem, and waited for the fulfilment of the main promise of the gospel dispensation, that on the first day of the week, as they were all with one accord in one place, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. It was on this occasion that the apostle Peter traced the extraordinary effects produced to the accomplishment of prophecy. This is that, said he, which was spoken by the prophet Joel; and it shall come to pass in the last days saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh:—and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophecy.

It was when Christ appeared within the veil before God with the blood of his sacrifice, that the fountain of Divine influence was opened, from which those copious streams issued forth, which carried fertility in their course, and which made the wilderness and the solitary place to be glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose. In testimony of the value and virtue of his transcendent work, the Holy Spirit descended in his enlightening and life giving influences. The legal barrier to his return being removed by the lifting up of Christ upon the cross, the communication of the Spirit in the plentitude of his blessings immediately followed. No sooner did the apostle begin to preach salvation through the death of the Redeemer, than this Divine agent rendered the word preached instrumental in producing conviction and conversion in thousands, and in drawing their hearts to the exalted Lord. He glorified Christ by bearing witness concerning him; by opening the mind to a perception of his excellencies, and the heart to the reception of his truth; by maintaining in the soul a continued sense of dependence upon him; by conveying blessings to us out of his fulness; and by producing in us a conformity to his image.

I. The Spirit glorifies Christ by bearing witness concerning him. The points at issue between the Saviour and the Jews who crucified him were, the dignity of his nature as the Son of God, and the Divine authority of

his mission. They charged him with blasphemy, and upon this charge condemned him to death, because he claimed equality with God. Though he by his ministry unfolded the greatness of his Father's love, and by his atoning sufferings procured eternal redemption, he had been treated as an impostor and a malefactor. For the purpose of deciding this controversy, and vindicating his claims, he appointed twelve apostles who after his ascension should bear testimony to the purity of his life, the truth and excellency of his doctrine, the fulfilment of prophecy in his birth, character, miracles, work and death, and the reality of his resurrection from the dead, by which he was declared to be the Son of God with power.

But what could the testimony of twelve such individuals avail to the accomplishment of these important ends? They possessed not those worldly advantages which were calculated to make them successful advocates. How could they hope to persuade the Jews to believe that they were chargeable with the aggravated guilt of putting to death the Messiah, whose day their fathers anticipated with joy, and who was the object of hope to their nation? Nor were the doctrines which they were authorised to proclaim likely to gain a ready admission either with Jews or Gentiles. He whom they announced as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world, had been born in poverty, had during his life experienced privation, and had been condemned and crucified. Was it probable, reasoning according to the dictates of human wisdom, that mankind would be induced to give credit to the testimony which affirmed that this person was truly Divine, the Messenger of the King of kings, who had been charged with the most important embassy to his revolted subjects? The declaration was directly at variance with the feelings and expectations which the Jews sacredly cherished; as well as with the most firmly established maxims and prejudices of the Gentiles. The preaching of Christ crucified was to the one deeply offensive, a thing which they utterly loathed; while to the other it appeared so weak, so foolish, as not to merit a serious consideration.

Had the work of bearing testimony concerning Christ been left to the unaided instrumentality of the apostles, their success would seem to have been morally impossible. But this was entrusted to the agency of the Holy Spirit, whose power and knowledge enabled him effectually to plead the cause of the risen and glorified Redeemer, and to render the weakness of the individuals employed subservient to the advancement of his kingdom. "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me : and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning."* Though the witness of the Spirit is here spoken of as distinct from the testimony of the apostles, theirs was in reality the effect of his mighty power which rested upon them, and which wrought by them. Through them he performed those signs and wonders which carried along with them the evidence of their Divine original, and which rendered indubitable the truth of that message concerning Christ, which his servants delivered. They doubtless bore witness to the person and work of their Lord, as well by their sufferings, integrity, and constancy, as by their miracles ; but it was in the latter especially, that the Holy Spirit gave such visible demonstration of his presence and power unto the world, as though his testimony had been altogether distinct and separate.

What were the subjects respecting which this Divine person gave evidence ? To this question we are enabled to reply in the language of our Lord : "When He is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment ; of sin, because they believe not on me ; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more ; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." By the testimony of the Holy Spirit concerning the person and mediatorial work of Christ ; by witnessing to the validity of his claims to a Divine nature, and to the truth of his declarations respecting the designs of his suffering and death,

* John, xv. 26. .

he reproved the world of the guilt of their infidelity in rejecting him. In innumerable instances he so effectually convinced of the nature of this sin, the consequences to which a continuance in it necessarily leads, and of the indispensable obligation of believing on the Saviour, in order to salvation, that myriads gladly received the gospel. Meanwhile, he also bore witness to the Saviour's righteousness, both personal and official, or, to the purity of his life, and the merit of his obedience unto death, both of which are so closely conjoined. This he did by proving that he had been raised from the dead, that he had gone to the Father, that he had been exalted to the highest dignity and glory, far above all principality and power, and that, consequently, God had testified his acceptance of him as his Son and our Saviour. Nor was the testimony of the Spirit less effectual in convicting the world of the iniquity of that judgment which had been passed upon Christ at the instigation of Satan; and in thus baffling that enemy in the power he had exercised, and in ejecting him from those dominions which he had usurped.

Though the Holy Spirit has ceased to bear witness to Christ by working miracles, he still continues to plead his cause, by producing conviction of sin, by discovering to men their need of his righteousness, and by effectually enabling them to believe and obey the gospel.

II. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by acting towards the church in such a way as to supply his personal presence. He is indeed with his people alway, even unto the end of the world; but personally he is in heaven, where he is to abide until the time when his plan of mercy, in regard to the existing state of things, is fulfilled. He assured his disciples that the Holy Spirit, after his ascension, would so far represent him that they should find the departure of his bodily presence an advantage to them. In consequence of the copious communication of his influences—a communication which could not be made to the same extent till the Saviour was glorified—they were filled with spiritual knowledge and consolation—with all joy and peace in believing, and

made to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Ghost.

In thus abiding with the church, he pursues no designs different from those which Christ came to accomplish; and the work which he performs is, properly speaking, not his own, but his by whom he has been sent, and in whose name it is wrought. "He shall not speak of himself, but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak, and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me, for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you." The love, grace, and wisdom, which he reveals, are those of the God of salvation; the atonement, mediatorial offices, and Divine excellencies, which he discloses, are those of the Redeemer; the beautiful and magnificent temple which he is building, rests upon his person and doctrine as its foundation; and that truth which is the means of regeneration and sanctification, is the word of Christ. The end of his mission, the great design of his office, is to glorify the Mediator, by making an effectual discovery of his truth, by giving an experience of his grace, in the saving illumination of the mind, and in the peace, purity, and consolation, of the heart. All the blessings he conveys are out of the fulness which it hath pleased the Father should dwell in Christ, are shown unto us as the effects of his purchase, and in their relation to the merits of his obedience and sufferings. In this way he acts for the Saviour, pleads his cause, performs his work, directs, consoles, sustains, and sanctifies believers, and effects, in the name of the Lord Jesus, whatever his glory and kingdom require to be done on earth.

III. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by opening the mind to a perception of his excellencies, and the heart to the reception of his truth. I am aware, that this is the entrance to a very extensive field—far too wide for our present inspection. I shall, therefore, do little more at this time than briefly state the fact; and shall, for the greater part, reserve, till a future opportunity, the proof of its necessity.

Man, as a sinner, is both guilty and depraved, and,

therefore, he requires not only the mediation of Christ, as the ground of pardon and justification, but the Holy Spirit to renovate and sanctify his nature. Without the work of the Redeemer, he could have no access to God; and without the operation of the Spirit he could not be meet for the enjoyment of his presence. As he would have remained under the curse, unless he had been justified by the righteousness of the one; so would he have continued under the dominion of innate depravity, unless he were created anew by the power of the other. Nor was the work of Christ more necessary to avert the wrath of God from mankind, than the office and influences of the Spirit to remove the spiritual darkness and death under which they are fallen.

This Divine agent begins his operation on the human mind by opening it to perceive the character, excellencies, and work of the Redeemer. He glorifies Christ by removing the veil from off the heart, and presenting to the view of the awakened, convinced, and humbled sinner, that mighty Deliverer whose compassion brought him down to the death of the cross, and whose power and everliving intercession enable him to save to the uttermost all those who come unto God by him. In consequence of this recovering of sight to the blind, Divine truth, especially Jesus, who is the way, and the truth, and the life, is clearly seen; the character and perfections of God are beheld with corresponding impressions of deep abasement; those false supports, which had hitherto served to keep the mind at ease, are discovered to be refuges of lies; and in proportion as conviction of sin is produced is concern felt to win Christ, and be found in him. Though the law, the word, and the dispensations of God are insufficient to effect this illumination, this spiritual change, of themselves, they are made effectual as means for its accomplishment by the power of the Holy Spirit: and, under his agency, the law of the Lord converts the soul, makes wise the simple, and enlightens the eyes.

Hence, this great work on the soul of man is uniformly represented, both in the Old Testament and in the New, as peculiar to the Holy Spirit. I need not confirm this

position by numerous quotations; but merely refer to the language of our Lord to Nicodemus, in which he clearly informs him that the efficient cause of regeneration is the Holy Spirit, the external emblem of whose influence is water. Jesus answered and said unto Nicodemus,—“Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus saith unto him, “How can a man be born when he is old; can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* This agency is universally necessary to true conversion, because the condition of all men, as unregenerate, is the same, however much they may differ in constitutional endowments, and external advantages; and because the state to which all are brought who experience this change, is also the same.

In confirmation of this, the apostle expressly declares, in conformity with the language of our Lord just quoted, that the natural man, that is man in his natural state, in contradistinction to man in a spiritual or regenerate state,—receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. He may, without spiritual discernment, possess such a theoretical knowledge of them as seems necessary even in order to dislike them; but, destitute of this Divine illumination, he has no perception of their beauty and excellency, no relish for them, and no disposition to believe in them. Hence, while the same apostle affirms that this blindness in regard to Christ and the great realities of the gospel is fatal, he ascribes its removal to the direct operation of God. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For God, who commanded the light

* John, iii. 2—8.

to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

IV. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ, by maintaining on the mind a sense of dependence upon him. If the ends for which he illuminates and renovates the soul be to perceive the Divine character and excellencies of the Redeemer, and that the heart may be opened to the cordial reception of him, he cannot cease, of course, to pursue the same objects in carrying on the good work which he has begun. How does he accomplish these designs? By the same means through which he produced conviction of sin at first; that is, by the word of God, rendered efficacious for keeping the soul alive to a sense of the evil, odiousness, and danger of transgression; and the infinite grace and compassion of Him who stooped so low that he might redeem us from all iniquity. He teaches the person in whom he dwells, by giving him still more enlarged views of his corruption, his wants, and weaknesses, his absolute need of the Saviour in all the characters in which the gospel exhibits him, as made of God unto us, wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.

Nor will the work of the Holy Spirit appear unnecessary in this respect to those who have a just perception of the mighty influence of the principles of self righteousness, and self sufficiency, so natural to man. By the operation of the former of these principles, how strong is the tendency to forget that he has nothing in himself whereof to glory, that as he was in the first instance accepted as an undeserving sinner, and justified solely on the ground of the perfect righteousness of Christ, so he must continue to hold fast the doctrine of a gratuitous justification as the beginning of his confidence stedfast unto the end. By the insinuating power of the principle of self sufficiency, how prone is he, even after he is enlightened from above, to overlook the humbling fact, that of himself he can do nothing, that it is only by the continued supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ he can live so as to answer the ends of his being; and that while he works out his own salvation with fear and trembling, he

must do so in the recollection that it is God that worketh in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. It was by the beguiling influence of a self sufficient spirit that the church of Laodicea was gradually led to say, "I am rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," not considering that all the while it was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.

Should any in whom the Holy Spirit dwells fall into this frame of mind, he will effectually awaken them to a sense of their guilt and destitution, and lead them in the exercise of repentance and faith to that only refuge to which they can flee. By producing in their minds a salutary dread of the Divine displeasure, and shedding abroad the love of Christ in their hearts, they feel more deeply the value of his precious blood, and the necessity of receiving constant supplies out of his fulness: and though the Saviour is the same now in regard to his excellencies that he always has been, his infinite loveliness and worth are more endeared to them. In this way they are kept at the feet of Jesus, in a teachable spirit, looking up to him for instruction and direction, relying on him alone for acceptance to their persons and services, and supplicating the power of his grace to work in them all the good pleasure of his goodness, and to mould them entirely to his will. God forbid, say they, that we should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto us, and we unto the world. Yea, doubtless, and we count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord, and count them but dung that we may win Christ, and be found in him; not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.

While the primary end of the Holy Spirit in maintaining this frame in believers is to glorify Christ, his purposes in regard to them are their peace, and joy, and holiness. He is in them the author of these blessings, not merely by presenting to them in the written word an immoveable ground of confidence, in the person, work, and ever-living intercession of the Redeemer, but by

communicating to them an experience of the blessings of his purchase. It is through his operation that they are enabled to recognise their relation to God as his adopted children, and can approach him with filial confidence, crying Abba, Father. It is because he shews to them the things of Christ, and makes such effectual application of them, as realities submitted to their senses of taste, touch, and vision, that they have assurance of God's love, and are filled with all joy and peace in believing. He teaches them to regard this happiness as their privilege, depending not on accidental causes, but on Him who is unchangeable in the dignity of his person, the efficacy of his mediation, the tenderness of his compassion, and the faithfulness of his promises ;—Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Hence the prayer of the apostle for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, the possession of which he represents as inclusive of pure and substantial joy, and of all spiritual good. “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God.”*

* Eph. iii. 14—18.

CHAPTER IV.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE INFLUENCES OF THE
HOLY SPIRIT IN CONVERSION.

It has been well observed, that the question is not, what is the cause of the sinner's unbelief, but what is the cause of the believer's faith? The cause of the sinner's unbelief is not the withholding of Divine influence. He is an accountable being without a Divine influence; and he is accountable in proportion to his powers and capacities, and the amount of his privileges and the means of knowledge afforded to him. He has the powers of a free agent, and he is assured by his supreme ruler and judge, that he must give an account of himself to God.

I shall attempt to answer briefly the following questions which are preliminary to an accurate and thorough knowledge of the office and work of the Holy Spirit in the economy of redemption.

What is meant by the influences of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of man? What is it that renders his influence, power, or operation, necessary? Is there any ambiguity in saying that God withholds from any sinner what is necessary for his salvation? Does the Holy Spirit originate life in the soul dead in sins? Does the Holy Spirit exert his saving power in accordance with the distinctive plan of sovereign differential grace?

1. What is meant by the influences of the Spirit in the conversion of man? The word influence is a vague term. As the heavens declare and teach the glory of God, so do they exert an influence on the minds of intelligent observers. And inasmuch as the written word was inspired by the Holy Spirit, it may be said, that the influence of the warnings, threatenings, counsels, and promises of the word, is the influence of the Holy Spirit.

There are those, accordingly, who maintain that this, and in general, the influence of means, is all that is exerted, or that is necessary to be exerted, in the conversion of man. To admit, therefore, that conversion is by the influence of the Spirit, is as indefinite as the admission that salvation is by Jesus Christ. The trinitarian and the antitrinitarian, the man who believes in the supreme divinity of Christ, and he who denies it, alike acknowledge that they look for salvation by Jesus Christ. In like manner, many conceal their denial of the true work of the Spirit under the indefinite expressions, that in every case conversion is by Divine influence; while by these terms they only mean the influence or the plying of means.

This is the case with certain parties in the present day who have hitherto laid claim to orthodoxy. They deny an inward influence or energy of the Spirit different from that of means. "There are means, say they, by which the Holy Spirit teaches men the truth, and induces them to attend to his instructions." And this influence of man they maintain is all that is necessary to salvation. "Has God withheld his Spirit's saving power from man, or not? Was that power withheld even from Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom? We distinctly deny that it was. By reading the 19th Psalm, and Acts xiv. 16—17, and Rom. i. 16th and 20th verses, you will see, that God's influence to bring man to know and love him, is not withheld from any human being enjoying reason."* "In the account of Pentecost, there is not a word about an inwardly working power used in the conversion of sinners. In their prayer, the apostles mention no such influence, and we read of none being given. Why should they pray for any other influence than that of which Jesus taught them, the sufficiency even to convert such sinners as the Sodomites? With such instruction before their minds, why should they think of an inward illuminating power at all?"

In this language, which is very explicit, it is clearly maintained, that the influence by which conversion is

* The entire correspondence between the four Congregational Churches in Glasgow.

effected, is solely of an external kind:—that this influence is nothing else than means, and is not an influence accompanying means:—that in order to his discerning the Divine excellence of the truth, and so receiving it, the sinner stands in need of nothing more than the presentation of that truth to his mind, with a sufficiency of outward evidence of its coming from God:—that miraculous works, and even the manifestation of the being and perfections of God in creation, and the arrangements of Providence in the condition of individual sinners, as coming under the designation of the influence,—the converting influence of the Holy Spirit:—and that there is no influence of the Spirit put forth in conversion that is necessarily efficacious, but such influence only as may be resisted and fail. In short, the influence of the Spirit is denied, and it is the means, and nothing but the means that operates. It is the word alone, not any converting influence accompanying the word, that produces conversion. The operation or agency of the Holy Spirit accompanying the means is thus denied; and what the parties to whom we refer term the influence of the Spirit, is merely the influence of the word, of evidence, and of circumstances, operating on the human mind independently of any efficacious, inward, illuminating, supernatural energy. This is a revival of Pelagianism.

The scripture doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit is this, that in the case of sinners who are converted to God, there is a direct inward operation of the Holy Spirit upon their minds, accompanying the means, and rendering them effectual. The operation or power of the Spirit is different from the means, though it accompanies the means; and it is this power that quickens the dead in trespasses and in sins, and creates anew in Christ Jesus. I waive all discussion about its resistibility: it is sufficient to say, that when the Holy Spirit purposes to subdue the sinner to God, and to convert him, his purpose he infallibly accomplishes. When we speak of the influence of the Holy Spirit therefore, we mean the operation or power of the Holy Spirit, distinct from means, but accompanying the means;—the only power by which sinful men are born again; (John iii. 5)

by which they are savingly illuminated in the knowledge of the truth ; (Eph. i. 17, 18 ; 2 Cor. iii. 18 : John xiv. 26,) and by which they are sanctified, (1 Cor. vi. 11.)

2. What is it in man that renders this influence, operation, or power, necessary ? This question will be answered at greater length afterwards. In the mean time, I observe, though it may be deemed unnecessary, that it is not the want of any natural powers in man required to constitute him an accountable being. These he already possesses, and the appeals, expostulations, and warnings of the word of God, are addressed to him as a rational and moral agent. If his heart were right with God, the means of grace alone would be sufficient to induce him to receive with gratitude and joy the message of redeeming love and mercy. But his depravity and alienation from God render the operation or power of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary to his conversion. That his mighty power is necessary to the conversion of sinful man, is affirmed by the following declarations of scripture : " Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him. No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; for they are foolishness unto him ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." John iii. 3—8, and vi. 44—65 ; 2 Cor. ii. 14.

In this latter passage we are to understand by the natural man, man in his natural and unconverted state ; and it is affirmed that to him the things of the Spirit are foolishness. The doctrine of Jesus Christ and him crucified,—the doctrine of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but to them who are called and saved it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Man in his natural state does not discern the real character and the Divine excellency of this glorious gospel ; its rich manifestation of the character of God, or its admirable adaptation to the wants of man. Here, then, is the hindrance to the reception of the salvation of Christ ; a hindrance which arises from, not only the absence of a

right state of heart, but from a state of heart so far wrong, that it is enmity against God. In consequence of the blindness of mind thence arising, the glory of the gospel is hid: and it is only God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, that can change this state of mind, by shining into the heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. iv. 6.)

It is this that renders the operation or power of the Holy Spirit absolutely necessary to the conversion of sinful man. He only can change the bias of the heart, and give the recovery of the sight to the spiritually blind. This work which he only can perform, he has graciously undertaken. For he has said: "I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you, and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh, that they may walk in my statutes, and keep mine ordinances, and do them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." Ezek. xi. 19. 20. The effect ascribed to the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a change from barrenness to fertility and fruitfulness: the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted for a forest. Isa. xxxii. 15. It is only when the Holy Spirit convinces of sin, humbles the sinner under a deep sense of it, and shews him at once his desperate malady and the divinely appointed, and only remedy, that he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of his soul. John xvi. 8—10.

3. Does the Holy Spirit originate life in the soul dead in sin? It is scarcely necessary to ask this question, after the observations which have already been made. The affirmative is established not only by numerous direct declarations of scripture, but by those images of regeneration, resurrection, and creation, under which conversion is represented. These similitudes used by the Holy Spirit, must have an appropriate meaning, and what other meaning can they have than this, that by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit life is originated, and life is imparted? According to the views of those who maintain, that by the influence of the Spirit we are to understand merely that the Holy Spirit as a Divine

agent brings the means into operation, and plies the means on the minds of men, the similitudes of a birth, a resurrection, a creation, mean nothing more than the change which they think may be produced by the use of means exclusively. The existence of a direct influence of the Holy Spirit they deny. The doctrine of an inwardly working power used in the conversion of sinners they repudiate. They ascribe the efficiency to the means, and to the means alone. Whatever, therefore, may be their admissions at present of human depravity, and of the enmity of the heart against God, history shews, that the denial of the necessity of inward, special, efficacious grace to the conversion of sinners, leads to the denial of man's depravity. Thus it was with Pelagius and his associates, who admitted neither the corruption of human nature, nor the necessity of the Holy Spirit; who maintained that we derive no taint of moral pollution from our first parents, but are born as pure and unspotted as Adam was when he came from the hand of his Creator; that mankind by their natural faculties can, by the mere influence of means, do all that the gospel requires them to do, without any direct, inward, supernatural power.

Scripture, as we understand it, represents mankind as dead in trespasses and in sins,—as children of disobedience, and children of wrath,—as alienated from God, being enemies to him in their minds and by wicked works. But if there were no special, supernatural influence of the Holy Spirit exerted in the conversion of sinners, all would persist in their own way, refuse the salvation of the gospel, and perish in their sin. It is not till sinners are made to hear by a Divine power the voice of the Son of God, that they live. We may be told that men ought to obey that voice irrespectively of any supernatural influence,—that they are responsible for the use of those means and opportunities which God has given to them of becoming wise unto salvation; and that if they perish with the offer of a free and full salvation, the blame is all their own. This we not only admit, but zealously maintain. But the present question, as has been observed, is one of fact. “We grant that all condemned sinners will be without excuse for not having

embraced the gospel;—because, even apart from all external evidence, the gospel is its own witness; it bears the impress of Divinity,—so that in the eyes of all right-hearted creatures, God would at once be seen in it; and the one and only cause of its rejection lies in the moral aversion of the human heart. The question why this depravity still remains, when such an influence as that of the love of God in the gospel of his Son is brought to bear upon it, has its answer in the very depth and force of this depravity;—and we must be allowed to add, it furnishes one of the strongest evidences of the necessity of such an additional influence as that for which we contend,—and for the conclusion, when among many who hold out against the appeals of the gospel, a few yield to them—that the cause of their yielding must be sought in such additional influence, and that in that influence must be found the true answer to the question —“Who maketh thee to differ?”

If it be admitted, that sinful man is spiritually dead, how can it be denied that life must be imparted to him by the Holy Spirit before he can live? Can the mere operation of means unaccompanied with a special Divine influence accomplish this? If man were converted merely by the means,—its evidence and its impressiveness—the distinction between him and others would be owing to himself, and he would have whereof to glory. But on the supposition that spiritual life is originated by the Holy Spirit—the only supposition that accords either with scripture or with the facts of the case,—sinful man feels that he is a debtor to sovereign distinguishing grace. He was once blind, but now he sees; he was once dead, but now he lives; and he may say with the apostle, that it is Christ who lives in him, the source and the sustainer of his spiritual being. When the Holy Spirit converts the soul, he creates anew, he renovates, he gives life, according to the testimony of scripture. (John iii. 3—8, v. 24, 25; Rom. vi. 4; 2 Cor. v. 17; Ephes. ii. 1—5; Titus iii. 4—7. He produces a new nature: he creates a clean heart, and renews a right spirit; he puts the Divine law in the mind, and he writes it in the heart.

4. Does the Holy Spirit exert his saving power in accordance with the distinctive plan of sovereign differential grace? In answering this question, I would advert to another question, namely, Is there any ambiguity in saying that God withholds from any sinner what is necessary for his salvation? In reference to this mode of expression, and the sentiment it is intended to convey, three things are to be observed: First, That man has all the powers of mind which constitute him responsible for the right use of the means of salvation which are given to him. It is not owing to any want of efficacy in the means that he is not saved, but to his own indisposition and enmity of heart. Secondly, the offer of the great and unspeakable gift is free and unrestricted. There is no exception, there is no limitation. The poor, the halt, the maimed, the blind—those who sit in beggary and in wretchedness on the highways, and at the hedges, are invited to come to the gospel feast. Whosoever will may come, and take of the water of life freely. Thirdly, it is declared that the Holy Spirit is given to him that asketh. “I say unto you,” said our Lord, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke xi. 9—14.

Are we not then warranted in maintaining, that he who asks the Holy Spirit will obtain that gift? Has any one ever earnestly and prayerfully asked his special and saving influences, and been refused?

The doctrine of scripture on this head is clear and decisive. But the testimony of scripture is not less clear and decisive, that the nature of man is deeply depraved; that he turns away in aversion from the spiritual acquirements of God's law, and from a salvation from sin and

misery so freely offered to him ; and that without a direct, special and sovereign interposition on the part of God, to change his nature, he would inevitably perish, even though an atonement has been made, and all things are ready. All men would thus perish but for God's purpose of grace, in pursuance of which he effectually calls some from darkness unto light, and rescues them as brands from the burning. The salvation of all such we trace to the distinguishing grace of God, and to the great love wherewith he loved them, even when they were dead in sins. From the beginning he has chosen them unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ : according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love : having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved : in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ before the world began. All that the Father giveth me, shall come to me ; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it again at the last day." Eph. i. 3—7 ; 2 Tim. i. 9 ; John vi. 37—39.

To the question, how comes the sinner to believe to the saving of his soul, while others continue in unbelief and perish, these declarations of the word of God furnish the reply. The distinction between the believer and the unbeliever originates in God's purpose of grace, and in the direct and special influence of the Holy Spirit put forth in pursuance of, and in accordance with, that purpose. According to this plan some are rescued, while others are left to the consequences of their sins ;

but according to the view of those who deny the existence of any such distinctive and gracious purpose, all are abandoned to their own depravity and its consequences, no extraordinary power being exerted on any. According to the view given in the passages above quoted of God's elective interposition on behalf of sinners, there can be but one answer given to the question, "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" That answer is, it is God alone. He, and he only, is the author of the work of grace in every soul in which that work is begun. This is altogether the effect of his gracious choice; and this work he accomplishes without any violation of the freedom of man's agency as an accountable being.

If all men are alike by nature enemies to God; if there be no difference in this respect—then, the operation of the Holy Spirit is equally necessary to all men in order to their turning unto God. Boasting is for ever excluded; and all the saved are constrained alike to say, "By the grace of God we are what we are. Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake. Thou, holy Lamb of God, art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation."

Even the faith which unites to Christ is the gift of God. The repentance which is required is given by the exalted Saviour. The love to God and to the Redeemer which is the evidence of our union to Christ, is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Spirit. The good works by which we glorify our Father in heaven, are the fruits of the Spirit, and it is God who creates us anew so as to produce them. If we continue steadfast and immovable in the faith of the gospel unto the end: it is because we are kept by the power of God unto salvation. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. "Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption: that according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

5. Those who deny the inward and special influence of the Holy Spirit, quote in support of their views the

following passages. "Then began He to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not. Woe unto thee, Chorasin! Woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I say unto you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon, at the day of judgment than for you. And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day." Matt. xi. 20—24. It is maintained that these words signify, that if the exhortations to repentance, and the threatenings denounced against Tyre and Sidon for their sins, by the prophets, had been accompanied with such miracles as were done in Chorasin and Bethsaida, they would have sincerely repented. "Here our Lord teaches," say the persons to whose views I now refer, "that an influence more than sufficient to have converted Tyre and Sidon was exerted on Chorasin and Bethsaida—that an influence sufficient to have saved Sodom, was used with the people of Capernaum."

To me it appears that these words of our Lord imply, 1st. that the mighty works done by him in Chorasin and Bethsaida, rendered all before whom they were wrought without excuse. This is the tendency of the goodness of God towards mankind. 2nd. The words of our Lord further imply that the inhabitants of Chorasin, and Bethsaida, and Capernaum, were peculiarly hardened in sin. They were so by their resisting the manifestations of the Divine power and goodness, which had not been vouchsafed to Tyre, and Sidon, and Sodom. Our Lord is to be understood as speaking after the manner of men, and as conveying in strong and forcible language a view of the utter inexcusableness, and the aggravated guilt of those who had been favoured with his ministry, but who repented not. It is a mode of expression not unusual with the sacred writers, by which greater hardness in sin and greater aggravation of guilt, are declared. Thus, God said to the prophet Ezekiel (Ezek. iii. 5—7), "Thou

art not sent to a people of a strange speech, and hard language, whose words thou canst not understand: surely had I sent thee unto them, they would have hearkened unto thee. But the house of Israel will not hearken unto thee ; for all the house of Israel are hard hearted." Here, the sentiment intended to be conveyed is the peculiar obduracy of Israel. In like manner in the other passages alluded to, our Lord designed to express very strongly, not the greater readiness of the Syrians and Sodomites to return to God, but the extreme impenitence and hardness of heart of the inhabitants of the upbraided cities. Besides, it is far from clear, that our Lord meant by repentance in the Syrians that change of heart denoted by conversion. On any supposition he merely affirms the result that would have taken place in Tyre and Sidon, if they had been favoured with his ministry ; he says nothing concerning the efficient cause of it. That would have been owing, not to miraculous works merely, but to the special influence of the Spirit. In confirmation of this, our Lord in the verses which immediately follow those in which he upbraided Chorasin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, attributes the difference of saving knowledge between persons equally favoured with external means to the good pleasure of God. (Matt. xi. 25, 26.)

A second class of passages quoted by those who deny the special influence of the Spirit, are those in which God declares his ways to be equal. "The children of thy people say, the way of the Lord is not equal ; but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and commiteth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby." Ezek. xxxiii. 10—20. It is maintained from this, and similar passages, that if God give special influence to one person which is not given to another, that his way would not be equal ; that is, that he would be partial. In answer to this, I need only observe, that God is righteous in all his ways, and to every being : but righteousness does not require that he should shew undeserved favour. In point of fact, all

mankind have not the same external advantages. The inhabitants of the upbraided cities were more highly favoured than those of Tyre and Sidon. For sinners of our fallen race a Saviour has been provided, while the fallen angels have been passed by.

A third class of passages adduced in support of their views by the persons referred to, are such as the following from the prophet Isaiah. (Isa. v. 1—7.) “What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.” Here it is alleged, that God does to men all that he can—all that he can consistently with the good of the whole. This, and similar passages are to be understood by us as expostulations and appeals founded upon man’s responsibility. In such portions of his word, God addresses man as a reasonable, accountable, being, who, as a moral agent ought to have regard to his real welfare; and who has in his moral nature, apart from any communicated special influence, the constituents of responsibility. To found upon the expression, “What could I have done more than that I have done?”—the notion, that there remained with God no additional converting influence to put forth, and that, consequently, no inward, special influence is ever exerted in the regeneration of man,—is not merely to overlook the fact that the elements of man’s accountableness exist in the moral constitution of man, independently of any supernatural power, but it is to misconstrue and disregard the meaning of the passage.

What is its meaning? What are we to understand by the words, “What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it?” Do they signify that God does all that lies in him to do, wherever he gives suitable and ample means? It is concerning the use of outward means only that God speaks in this passage; in proof of which he elsewhere in contradistinction promises to give a new heart, and a new spirit, so that they should all know him, and all be taught of him. Jer. xxxi. 30—36; Ezek. xxxvi. 25—30. God had highly favoured the Jewish people with means of grace and salvation, which had not been conferred on other nations.

“He shewed his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; and as for his judgments, they have not known them.” Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20.

But even unto Israel he gave not those advantages which we enjoy, on whom the Sun of righteousness has arisen with healing under his wings. To them he gave an ample sufficiency of means, in suitableness to the preparatory dispensation under which they lived: but undoubtedly, he did more for his vineyard, even in respect to the Jewish people, when he sent to them his own Son as the great Reconciler and Restorer. The means bestowed upon Israel in the time of Isaiah, were sufficient, had their hearts been rightly disposed: and what was there more to be done to the vineyard? Does this mean that God had done all that was in his power to do,—all that lay in him to do, and that his purpose was frustrated, having failed of success? We dare not entertain the thought—a thought most derogatory to the all perfect and all sufficient Jehovah. He had done all that was suitable or proper; and he appeals to the Jews themselves to say, whether more could have been reasonably expected from him.

The passage under consideration is of the same class with the following texts, and receives illustration from them. “The Lord God of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes and sending: because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place. But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord arose against his people, till there was no remedy.” 2 Chron. xxxvi. 15, 16. I am the Lord thy God who brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. But my people would not hearken unto my voice, and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts’ lust, and they walked in their own counsels. Oh! that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!” Psalm lxxxi. 10—15. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often

would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is left unto you desolate." Matt. xxiii. 37—39.

The fourth class of passages adduced in support of the views referred to, are such as mention the resistance of the Spirit. We believe, say the persons to whose opinion we allude, that the Holy Spirit exerts this influence upon all the hearers of the word of God, (alike) and that he is by many of them finally resisted. In support of this opinion they quote the following texts:—"Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost; as your fathers did, so do ye." "The Lord said, my Spirit shall not always strive with man." Acts vii. 51; Gen vi. 3; Isa. lxiii. 10; Nehem. ix. 30. I waive all discussion as to the distinction between what is termed the common and the special influence of the Spirit; and also as to the question whether the latter may be resisted. It is enough to observe that the resistance of the Spirit in the passages referred to, as it appears to me, denotes the withstanding of the Spirit in his word. Hence the declaration, "Thou testifiest against them by thy Spirit in thy prophets; yet would they not give ear."

When Stephen accused his auditors of resisting the Holy Ghost, as their fathers did, he could not mean that the Holy Spirit was at that time striving with them by an internal and subduing influence: for it is said, that "when they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth:"—a proof, surely, that they were under the working of a very different spirit,—even that spirit who operates in all the children of disobedience. They resisted the word which had been given by the Holy Ghost, when they rejected, and killed his messengers.

CHAPTER V.

THE controversy concerning the depravity of human nature, and the necessity of the operation and influence of the Holy Spirit, began in the fourth century, and was brought under the consideration of the second General Council of Constantinople, in 381. It was revived by Pelagius in the early part of the fifth century: and as the opinions which he then broached have been held by many persons since, and are now zealously advocated, in a modified form, it is proper that we should know what these opinions are, and the doctrines which Augustine advanced in opposition to them. We shall therefore appropriate this chapter to the consideration of them.

THE AUTHOR, NATURE, AND UNSCRIPTURAL CHARACTER
OF PELAGIANISM.

PELAGIUS, a native of Britain, who lived early in the fifth century, resided for some time at Rome, afterwards in Africa and in Palestine. He appears to have possessed considerable talents, and Augustine admits that his moral character was unblameable. He broached those views regarding the fall of Adam, and the present state of human nature, which are known by the name of Pelagianism.

He maintained, that the sins of our first parents were imputed to them alone, and not to their posterity; that we derive no corruption from their fall, but are born as pure and unspotted as Adam came out of the hand of his Creator; that mankind, therefore, are capable of repentance and amendment, and of arriving at the highest de-

degrees of piety and virtue by the use of their natural faculties and powers; that external grace, or the motives exhibited in the gospel, are sufficient, without the internal operation of the Holy Spirit. He maintained that man does not need the Holy Spirit to enable him to do all that Christianity requires from him. Our natural powers, by which he asserted we can obey the will of God, he was not indisposed to call a Divine gift, while he held that the proper direction of these powers depends upon ourselves;—that natural death is not a consequence of the sin of Adam, but of the frame of man; and that Adam would have died, though he had not sinned.

It is supposed that Pelagius, though a native of Britain, was intimate with the teachers of the eastern church, who, especially in the school at Alexandria, had been led, in opposition to the gnostics, who taught the incurable and necessary evil of matter, to insist upon the free, self-determining power of man. This mode of expression, introduced by Justin, was continued by Clement and Origen; and the doctrine of human depravity, though not denied, did not hold in the system of those fathers a prominent place. Irrespectively of this consideration, the errors of Pelagius were the errors which naturally arose in a declining church;—they resulted from the prevailing notions of the superior excellency of an ascetic life, and the efficacy of forms. A monk himself, he had adopted the ascetic discipline peculiar to the monks. Satisfied with the state of his moral nature, and confident of his moral strength, he perceived not any marked contrast between his actual condition, and the purity of God's law. He was led by an external decency of demeanour, which was the effect of monkish ascetism, to overlook the nature and necessity of that inward holiness which proceeds from the faith of the gospel working by love. Expending his labours in lopping off the branches, the tree, the source of the evil, remained unchanged. While repressing evil in the outward man, he neglected to examine the heart, the fountain whence it flowed; and thus, the original evil continued uncured and unknown.

Nor did the hypocritical professions of many of the

monks tend to induce him to examine himself. They appear, on the contrary, to have produced a feeling of self-complacency. He thought, doubtless, that he actually possessed the virtue which they only feigned. Alluding to those who made a show of humility he said, "It is very easy to wear a poor garment, to salute another in lowly guise;—with the head bowed down,—to put on the appearance of humility and gentleness; it is easy to speak one's words but half out, with a low and scarcely audible voice, often to sigh, and with every word to call one's-self a sinner." He was ensnared and deceived, however, by the false notions which prevailed, more especially among the monastic orders, of the extent and universal obligation of the law of God, and he was thus led to imagine that Christian perfection might be attained by mere human power. He may have been confirmed in his views by coming in contact with persons who held, that faith is merely a speculative assent to Christianity, without any practical influence on the heart. He may have been strengthened in his opinions by observing, that there were those who were satisfied with this speculative belief, while they were in external communion with the church; "who thought they did enough, if they merely refrained from the grosser outbursts of the passions and desires, and who excused themselves for the rest by the corruption and weakness of human nature, now no longer able to obey the Divine commandments in all their strictness." At any rate, he looked in an opposite direction, and laid stress on the claims of the moral law, as it speaks through the voice of conscience, and the oracles of God. But in consequence of the false views which he entertained of the law, and his ignorance of the gospel, as a plan of redeeming mercy, he set up in opposition to, and in counteraction of, a dead faith, a cold and lifeless system of morals. It may be, that he was convinced of the sad degeneracy of Christians, in substituting outward forms, and a valueless profession, for the practice and the duties of morality; and it is probable that he really intended to arouse them from this state of apostacy from the Christian religion; but ignorant of God's righteousness, he vainly imagined to accomplish

his purpose, by shewing that the excuses which men derive from their weakness and corruption are unfounded,—that there is much latent goodness in the nature of man,—and that it depends upon himself whether it is to be put forth in virtuous exertion, or to be overlaid by evil desires and passions. Overlooking the present depraved state of human nature, he expatiated, impressively and eloquently, on the moral powers with which the Creator has endued him; and without professing to reject any doctrine of Scripture, he incorporated in his system those views only which were accordant with its ethical principles.

In opposition to this system, and as the defender of the doctrines of grace, Augustine appeared;—a man who, in the peculiar character of his mind, and in the history of his life, was a contrast to Pelagius. He had found peace after a severe and long conflict—after he had seen his sins, and felt their burden only in the blood of Christ. He learned from experience that man is depraved and helpless, that he is unable to rescue himself from his depravity and guilt, and that he cannot be justified by his own deservings. He also knew from experience that it was only the vital principles of Christianity, implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, that subdue inward corruption, and that enable the man, renewed after the image of God, to bring forth the fruits of real holiness. It was evident to him, as well from observation, as from the testimony of Scripture, that man when left to himself, without the saving and sanctifying grace of the Redeemer, remains alienated from God, and under the power and pollution of sin.

The question, then, forced itself on his consideration, Whence did evil come into the nature of man,—a nature which received its existence from God, the source of all goodness? His mind at an early period of his history had been pressed by this inquiry; and in seeking a solution, he had been led to embrace Manichæism. The same inquiry led him to abandon that system, and to rest satisfied with the answer which is given in Scripture;—that “by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, and that death has passed upon all men, because

all have sinned." This question was easily answered by Pelagius, who denied the hereditary depravity of human nature, and affirmed, that evil results from the preponderance of sense over reason, and to be necessarily attendant upon that moral freedom, without which virtue cannot exist.

It has been alleged, that Augustine was influenced in his views of human nature by Manichæism. But those who have made this charge must have been ignorant either of the doctrine of Manichæism, or of the doctrine of Scripture, regarding the depravity of human nature. Mani taught that evil has a self-subsisting existence; but Augustine held, in opposition to this, that evil is nothing else than the deviation of created being from the law of God. It has also been said, that Augustine had been led to adopt his doctrinal system, in consequence of his controversy with Pelagius: but his writings furnish evidence to prove that he held the same doctrines ten years before the opinions of Pelagius attracted public attention.

There are few persons mentioned in the annals of the church whose history is more instructive than that of Augustine, as it shows at different marked periods the progress of his mind in the knowledge of divine truth. Anxious in his inquiries, and candid and patient in his investigations, he at length attained clear, consistent, and comprehensive views of the great system which is taught in Scripture. The following were, in substance, the results of his long-continued and prayerful searchings of the oracles of God:—That all men are found in the same state of guilt and condemnation; that the reason why some are not rescued from the ruin into which all are fallen, through the guilt of the first transgression, while to others God shows mercy, according to his free and everlasting love, and calls them by his grace unto eternal life—the reason of this lies in the secret, and, to us, unsearchable decree of God; that the justice of God cannot be impeached, although its proceeding may surpass the measure of our knowledge; and that even, according to human relations, one cannot be accused of injustice, who, agreeably to his own will,

remits the debt of one person, while from another he requires payment.

It was while Pelagius was residing at Rome, near the beginning of the fifth century, that he heard a bishop cite the following words from the Confessions of Augustine :—" My God, bestow upon me what thou commandest, and command from me what thou wilt!" which words gave him great offence, as implying that all good comes from God, and that free-will is excluded. He expressed his displeasure ; and this appears to have given occasion to the more open avowal of his heretical sentiments, and to the commencement of the controversy between the Pelagians and Augustine.

The subject was first brought before an assembly of bishops at Jerusalem, which passed no censure upon Pelagius ; it was afterwards the matter of deliberation by the council of Diospolis, or Lydda, in Palestine, a council that acquitted Pelagius of all errors. At length it was brought to Rome, and referred by Cælestius and Pelagius to the decision of Zozimus, the bishop of that see. "The new pontiff, gained over by the ambiguous, and seemingly orthodox confession of faith, that Cælestius, who was now at Rome, had drawn up, and also by the letters and protestations of Pelagius, pronounced in favour of these monks, declared them sound in the faith, and unjustly persecuted by their adversaries. The African bishops, with Augustine at their head, little affected with this declaration, continued to maintain the judgment they had pronounced in this matter, and to strengthen it by their exhortations, their letters, and their writings. Zozimus yielded to the perseverance of the Africans, changed his mind, and condemned with the utmost severity, Pelagius and Cælestius, whom he had honoured with his approbation, and covered with his protection ; they were condemned by the same Ephesian council which had launched its thunder at the head of Nestorius ; in short, the Gauls, Britons, and Africans by their councils, and the emperors, by their edicts and penal laws, demolished this sect in its infancy." *

* Mosheim.

This result, however, was mainly owing to the talents, piety, scriptural knowledge, and indomitable power of Augustine; a result which was the more easily attained in consequence of its being in harmony with the creeds and confessions of the church.

When Pelagius, and his friend Cælestius, perceived that the tide of opinion and feeling was decidedly against them, they endeavoured to represent the subject of controversy as of little or no moment; and that the differences between the controversialists were merely speculative, and had nothing to do with faith. Another of the Pelagian party, however,—Julian, bishop of Eclanum, who had been excluded from the catholic church,—spoke of the subject in a very different tone. He inveighed against those of his own party, who, for reasons of worldly policy, submitted to the reigning power, and then said, that this controversy did not concern the essentials of faith, but turned upon obscure questions, which had little to do with the vital points of Christianity.

Augustine also maintained, that the subjects in controversy had an important bearing on the system of revealed truth. It required not either the sagacity or the piety of this great man to perceive, that the chief theme of Christianity,—that in which the essence of Christianity consists,—is the doctrine of justification by the righteousness of Christ, through the redemption in Christ Jesus; that this doctrine pre-supposes, and is closely connected with, that of the depravity of human nature; and that the admission of the depravity of human nature leads to the admission of the sin and fall of the first man, and of the consequences of his transgression. Unless the latter doctrines be admitted, the doctrine of redemption has no significance. It was, therefore, maintained by Augustine, that in the contrast between Adam and Christ, in Rom. v. 12—20, consists the essence of Christianity. “By the one, sin has come upon all men, and death by sin; by the other, we are redeemed from the curse of the law. As by the offence of the one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so, by the righteousness of one, the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by

one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

The subject of fundamental difference in the Pelagian controversy, was the relation of the present moral condition of mankind to the sin of Adam. The other subjects in dispute were collateral, and arose from this. According to the views which were entertained of man's need of divine influence to renew his nature, of the magnitude of the redemption which he requires, and of the other points which were debated between the parties. Augustine's fundamental position from which he set out, and to which he always came back, was, that man is now in a state of corruption, and that this corruption has been derived from Adam.

Pelagius, and all who held his views on this subject, differed in their opinions from Augustine respecting the freedom of the will. The former maintained, that moral freedom implies a power to determine with equal liberty between good and bad, and to choose accordingly; the latter, on the contrary, affirmed, that such an indifference or equipoise between good and evil, from which one can determine himself any moment equally for one or the other, is wholly inconceivable. For all intelligent beings must be perfectly holy, or perfectly depraved, or partly virtuous, and partly depraved. In a being perfectly holy, there can be no wish, no inclination to what is evil. In a being perfectly depraved, there can be no wish, no inclination to what is good. In every case, the person acting is determined in his disposition before he comes to action. There can be no such thing as entire indifference at the moment of action. The good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, nor the evil tree good fruit. The man who is animated by supreme love to God, and by desire to do his will, is not in a state of indifference, and therefore chooses the good: but the man who is otherwise minded,—who is a lover of pleasure more than a lover of God—chooses the evil. God who is absolutely perfect, cannot look upon evil, and will always do that which is good; and yet, he acts not from necessity but from choice, and is free in the most enlarged sense of the expression. In proportion as created beings resemble

God in purity and holiness, will they be removed from a state of indifference with regard to evil: they will, by the disposition and habit of their nature, choose the good, and that only. "As evil is something repugnant to the original constitution of rational beings,—something not founded in nature but contradictory to it, it follows, that what is regarded in the Pelagian definition as the sign of moral freedom, presupposes a corruption of the moral nature, since evil exerts upon it a power of attraction which it ought not to exert."

Augustine maintained, that man in his present depraved condition, so far from being free, in the proper sense of that word, is the slave of sin. Mankind are enthralled by this indwelling and pervading evil. "While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage." We cannot believe that the present state of thralldom and corruption was the condition in which man was originally created. Undoubtedly he existed when he came first from the hand of his Maker in a state of moral freedom; and this state must have been lost by a deviation from the law of God. Man by departing from the Fountain of happiness, and by yielding to evil, fell more and more under the bondage of sin, and at length became the servant of sin. This was the opinion of Augustine.

But Pelagius maintaining, that moral freedom is such a freedom of choice as consists in indifference, or in that equilibrium by which the will is without all antecedent bias; affirmed that human nature is now what it always was. Freedom of choice, he conceived, implied the possibility of evil as well as of good. The only reason why man, who has the power of choosing either good or evil, does at any time choose evil, is his own self-determination. This power of self-determination he has now to the same extent as he had when in Paradise. The moral condition of man is the same now as it was then.

Augustine maintained in connexion with his views of the freedom of the will, that human nature in its original state was in fellowship with God, was obedient to his will, and conformed to his image; but that now it is

estranged from God, not subject to his law, and under the dominion of sin. His intellectual and moral powers show that he was destined to have communion with God, and to enjoy the exalted happiness that flows from his gracious presence, and from the doing of his will. But these powers are now debased by sin, and are often employed without regard to the will or the glory of God. His moral constitution has undergone a great deterioration, and he is an alien from his Maker, and a guilty transgressor of his law. This, however, was denied by Pelagius, who maintained, that man has now the moral power for the practice of all goodness. He was of opinion, that he was now in a condition much the same as that in which Adam was placed before the fall; and that having originally been endued by the Creator with understanding and will, with capacity for the knowledge and practice of virtue, he has been left entirely to himself in the application of these powers. "It is a sentiment which lies at the basis of Pelagianism, that after God had once made the world, and furnished it with all the powers necessary for its preservation and action, he left it to go on, with its inherent powers, according to the laws imposed upon it; so that the continued agency of God is mainly concerned in the preservation of these powers and faculties; but does not operate in the way of concurrence for their development and exercise. Augustine, on the contrary, makes preservation by God to be a continued creation; and regards the life and activity of the creature, both generally and in particular, as resting upon, and conditioned by, the Almighty and Omnipresent agency of God, and as subsisting in an absolute dependence upon the same every moment."

It thus appears, that the opinions of Augustine and Pelagius regarding the condition of Adam, and the nature and consequences of the first sin, were totally different. The Pelagians who denied that Adam was the federal head of his posterity, affirmed, that he acted for himself alone, and that the effects of his transgression terminated upon himself alone. How did they reconcile with this system, the prevalence of death among the descendants of the first man? By maintaining that

even to Adam, death was not a punishment, but a natural effect resulting from his constitution. He was created mortal, and he would have died even if he had not sinned. He was taken from the earth before the fall, and therefore, before the fall, his body was by its nature liable to dissolution. With regard to his offspring they are, until they themselves commit sin, in the same state of innocence in which Adam was before the fall; and death in their case, also, is merely the effect of their constitution.

Those opinions which have been adopted by the Socinians, were regarded by Augustine as repugnant to the clearest declarations of Scripture. He held that Adam was in a very different state before he sinned from that into which he fell by transgression; that in the former condition he enjoyed undisturbed communion with God; that all the powers of his nature were elevated, and acted in perfect harmony according to the will of God. Even the body had nothing in it of the seeds of mortality, and was the fit and willing organ of the soul, which was governed by heavenly influence. Had man continued in that holy and elevated condition, he would have been confirmed in holiness and happiness without the intervention of death. His sin was peculiarly aggravated, inasmuch as he transgressed the law of God with his free will, and while he was under no moral bondage. To yield to temptation before sin has corrupted and enslaved the powers of man is very different, as to the degree of guilt, from the moral turpitude of the same action afterwards. The external action was preceded by a departure of the heart from God. It was this inward apostacy that led to the bodily act that brought forth sin; and sin, when completed, brought forth death.

Hence the introduction of depravity into human nature,—depravity which has descended from Adam to all his offspring. Augustine, however, maintained, not only that this depravity, and consequent bondage to sin is transmitted from the first man to all his posterity, but also, that in consequence of his being the federal head of his offspring, his sin is to be regarded as the act of the human race, and that, therefore, there is an extension of

guilt and punishment to all mankind. This fact he inferred from the universal prevalence of the effects of sin. Death and other temporal evils come upon us, he maintained, through the sin of Adam, and consequently, must be regarded as a punishment. But if they are inflicted upon us as a punishment, we must admit that the sin of the first man, which occasioned them, is imputed to his posterity, in consequence of the federal relation in which he stood to them. This must be granted, unless we deny that pain and death, when inflicted by the hand of a holy and righteous God, have nothing penal in their nature, and may be endured by the innocent under his administration.

Notwithstanding, Pelagius and his friends denied both an hereditary corruption, and the imputation of Adam's sin to his posterity. They admitted, however, that mankind have deteriorated; "and this, in their view, is the foundation of the necessity of the different divine revelations, and the different means of grace employed by God, to counteract the downward tendency." They accounted for the deterioration of mankind by the force of evil habit and example. Whether there have been individuals who have escaped this contagion, and who have lived in perfect holiness to the last, is a point upon which Pelagius would not express a decided opinion. He referred, however, to one person, who was allowed by his opponents to have been sinless—the Virgin Mary.

It follows from these characteristic differences of the system of Pelagius, and that of Augustine, that in the former there was no material distinction between nature and grace, at least no such distinction as was recognised in the latter. In the former, the term grace appears to have been used in two acceptations: first, to denote all the communications of the love of God; and in this sense it was applied to the revelations of the will of God contained in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the New. And, secondly, it was sometimes used to denote all the moral and intellectual powers with which human nature is endued by God. To both these classes of gifts—to those which were obtained in the common course of nature, and to those which were supernatural,—such as

the inspired oracles of God, the general name GRACE was given. In the system of Augustine, grace is a divine influence exerted on the human mind, and so exclusively referable to the agency of God as to exclude merit: it is the influence of God upon the will, understanding, and faculties of men. This internal influence, Pelagius regarded as endangering his favourite theory as to free will, and was, therefore, not admitted. "God assists us," says he,* "by the instruction which he gives us, and by the revelation he has made, by opening the eyes of our hearts, by disclosing to us what will take place in the future world, that we may not be engrossed with present things." The passage, Phil. ii. 13, "God worketh in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure," he explains as follows: "God works in us to will what is good and holy, by kindling our minds, devoted to earthly desires, with the greatness of the future glory, and the promise of rewards; by leading the adoring will through the revelation of his wisdom to long for God; and by counselling us to all good."

From what has been advanced, it is almost unnecessary to say, that Christ was viewed in a very different light in the Pelagian scheme, from that in which he was regarded in the system of Augustine. In the former, he appeared merely as a teacher sent from God, revealing truths, the knowledge of which human reason could not of itself attain; exhibiting in his life and doctrine a most perfect rule and example of holiness; and bestowing the forgiveness of sins on all who obey him. In the Augustinian system, Christ was viewed not merely as the great Prophet, but as the High Priest of his people, through whose atoning sacrifice eternal redemption is obtained. It is by union to him that the believer is justified, sanctified, and washed, and obtains the spiritual life which will be perfected in heaven. By faith in him, he obtains the forgiveness of sins, and is made a partaker of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in him as the source of light, and life, and joy: he sheds abroad the love of

* As quoted by Augustine, *De græta Christi*, c. vii.

Christ in the heart, by which the fruits of righteousness are produced in the life.

According to Pelagius, mankind have been placed in three different states: in a state of nature, in which they obtained righteousness according to the light they possessed: and under the law, or the Mosaic dispensation, in which they obtained righteousness according to their particular circumstances: and, under grace. But Augustine maintained, that as man in all circumstances required redemption, so the only way in which it has been obtained since the fall, has been through the Lord Jesus Christ. According to him, all who have been saved of the human race have been saved in one way,—through the sacrifice and righteousness of the great Surety and Saviour of sinners.

Augustine had great merit in this controversy, in a way that has seldom been noticed. He presented the subject of Christian ethics in a clearer light than any of his predecessors. He showed, that we are to judge of the morality of actions, not according to the external circumstances in which they are performed, but by the internal principle from which they proceed. "The merit of Augustine, in this respect, consists particularly in this, that he pointed out the essential, internal connexion between Christian theology and Christian ethics, brought to light the peculiar principles of Christian ethics flowing from this connexion, made the nature of the Christian disposition prominent, in opposition to mere legality and the *OPUS OPERATUM*, and asserted the unconditional obligation of the moral law, in opposition to the looser principles which come in from the Greek church, such as, that the end sanctifies the means." He clearly showed, that it is the nature of the disposition that gives the character to the action; and that the heart of a sinful being must be renewed before the fruits of the life can be good. When we consider, that the age in which he lived was an age of forms and superstition, we must appreciate the superior sagacity of the man who perceived and clearly described the nature and foundation of true virtue.

Besides, Augustine had the merit of unfolding with great precision the progressive development of the operation of the grace of God in the advancement of the Christian character. He showed, that this Divine grace first awakens in sinful man a sense of the need of redemption, and enables him to flee for refuge to Christ, the hope set before him; implants new and vital principles within him, in the experience of which he dies unto sin and lives unto righteousness. The spiritual warfare is thus begun and carried on; but grace, communicated from the divine Redeemer, keeps the believer from falling, and makes him at length victorious over all evil. He is thus preserved by the power of God through faith unto salvation; and the result proves, that he has been chosen unto salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth.

It thus appears, that the Augustinian system was precisely the same with that which, in modern times, has been called Calvinism. The doctrine of grace in both was connected with the doctrine of predestination. In both, the salvation of fallen man in its origin, application, and final consummation in glory, is regarded as all of free and sovereign grace, reigning through righteousness unto eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The declining years of Augustine were employed in completing his theological writings connected with this controversy. He felt this to be the more necessary, in consequence of the passages which were adduced from his earlier works by the Pelagians and Semi-Pelagians, in support of their opinions," and to the great embarrassment of his enthusiastic admirers, who would not allow any error in a man whose authority with them was so great. Augustine, however, was far from claiming any such authority for his works; an authority which, in his view, belonged to the Bible alone. He said to those extravagant admirers of his, that they gave themselves needless trouble. He rejoiced in the acknowledgment, that he had made advances in the knowledge of the truth, and had found out many of his early errors to be such; and he was not now ashamed to point them out publicly in his works."

In conclusion, it may be observed, that in the progress of religious declension, both as it regards individuals and communities, there is first a dead formalism,—a resting in the rites and observances of religion. The second step in the process usually is the tacit adoption of cold Pelagianism. After resting in this system for a period, there is often a third step taken to a worldly Socinianism. This step sometimes, perhaps, not unfrequently, leads to infidelity.

The difference, if there was any difference, between the Anti-Pelagians and the Reformers, lay in this—"that, while both are advocates of grace, the former considered it chiefly in relation to the change which it effects on the heart, the latter in relation to the change which it produces on the state of the sinner." There is certainly less in the writings of Augustine about free justification, than in the writings of Luther, with whom it was the main point. There is a similar difference between the doctrines of the Jansenists and of the Reformers. In the works of the former—Pascal, Arnauld, Nicole—there is much about God's grace producing the first good desire in the heart, "but very little, and nothing very decisive about God's grace in freely justifying the sinner on the sole ground of the atonement and surety-righteousness of Christ."

BOOK II.

ON THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN REGENERATION.



CHAPTER I.

ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE SPIRIT: HE IS THE
AUTHOR OF SPIRITUAL BEING, SPIRITUAL LIFE,
AND TRUE HOLINESS.

IN order to form adequate conceptions of the administration of the Holy Spirit, it is necessary that we should entertain scriptural views, First, of the office which the Holy Spirit has gratuitously undertaken in the economy of redemption; Secondly, the part of God the Father and of the Son with respect to the Holy Spirit and his work; and, Thirdly, the terms in which the Holy Spirit speaks of his own actings in his application of himself and of his work to the souls of men.

I. The office which the Holy Spirit has graciously assumed in the economy of redemption. The Father sustains the character of Supreme Legislator and Ruler, and is represented to us in revealed truth as the primary author of the acts of authority, power, and grace, by which the Deity is made known to mankind. He is therefore presented first in the covenant of redemption,—as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,—the only true God,—in opposition to all the gods of the heathen. The Son of God sustains the office of Mediator, Saviour, and Redeemer, who came into the world to fulfil the counsels of Jehovah, and who by his obedience, humiliation, and death, has obtained eternal redemption for all who obey him. The Holy Spirit has undertaken the office of applying the benefits of redemption to the souls of men, of regenerating, sanctifying, and comforting them, and of making them meet for the heavenly inheritance. John iii. 16; Eph. i. 3, 4; 2 Tim. i. 9; 1 Tim. i. 15; Rom. viii. 2—9; Col. i. 27; John xiv. 17; xv. 26; xvi. 13, 14; xvii. 4; Rom. xi. 36.

We may not be able to understand, and certainly we are not bound to receive, all the explanations which have been given of this profound subject by ancient and modern divines. When they endeavour to reconcile the Divine unity with the subsistence of the three persons by telling us, first, that the Father is the Fountain of Deity, the principle and origin of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, all that we can understand by the language is, that the Father is first, the Son second, and the Holy Spirit third, in the order of their subsistence as revealed to us. They are beyond their depth when they attempt to give explanations of the meaning of the generation of the Son, and what has been called the procession of the Holy Spirit. When these theologians state, that the three persons in the Divine nature are inseparably joined together, so much so, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, always existed together by an indwelling so close as to be inconceivable to us, they state a fact clearly revealed in scripture, and which, though it surpasses our comprehension, we receive on the authority of the Divine testimony. We are taught to believe according to that testimony, that in the Infinite and Divine Essence, there are three intelligent subsistences;—that these three are not three different beings, natures, or essences, nor three modes, or developments of one and the same person; “that the consciousness and will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, while coincident in all the modes of infinite perfection, are yet not identical, but have respectively some distinctive property, the nature of which is to us unknown;” and that there exists the “most intimate, natural, necessary, eternal union of the Sacred Three.”

Great difficulties, doubtless, present themselves to us in the contemplation of this profound subject. But whence do these difficulties arise? First, from the nature of the subject, which, deep and unfathomable as it is, must necessarily be beyond the comprehension of any other than the Divine Being himself. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than hell, what canst thou

know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea.”* A second source of difficulty in understanding this subject is to be found in the limited range of our faculties. We, who find subjects in every department of nature beyond our comprehension, are not to be surprised that we are unable fully to comprehend the most profound of all subjects. And a third cause of the difficulties which we feel in contemplating the being and subsistence of God, arises from the fact, that there is only as much revealed of the subject as is suited to us in our present condition. How far our knowledge will be increased, and our difficulties removed or diminished, when that which is imperfect shall be done away, and we are exalted to a higher state of being, we must leave to be determined, till we arrive at that happy place where we shall know even as we are known.

II. The part of God the Father and the Son, with respect to the Holy Spirit and his work. It has been alleged by some eminent divines, that he is called the Spirit of the Father, chiefly on account of his eternal procession or emanation from him. It is for this reason, they say, that he is styled, not only the Spirit of God, but the Spirit that is of God, which proceedeth from him as a distinct person. They think it is on the same ground, primarily,—namely, that he proceedeth from the Son also, that he is called the Spirit of the Son, “the Spirit of Christ.” These are incomprehensible mysteries; and, though inserted in most of the ancient creeds and formularies, seem not to be explicitly and evidently revealed; perhaps it is therefore better to adore in silence, than to attempt any explanation of such subjects, which, not being clearly revealed, cannot otherwise be at all discovered or understood.”†

The controversy respecting the procession of the Holy Ghost arose in the eighth century. The Western church affirmed, that the Holy Spirit proceeded from the Son as well as from the Father; and thought the scripture supports this position, although the procession of the Spirit

* Job. ii. 7—10.

† Scott’s Comment. on John, xv. 26.

from the Son is not literally asserted. It was argued by the Latins, that, as he is called the Spirit of the Son, there seems to be no valid ground why we should not believe that the same relation is expressed in the one case and in the other. "Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts." "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." "When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you, . . . if I depart, I will send him unto you." It is maintained, that if the mission of the Holy Spirit by the Father is the consequence of his procession from him, we may conclude, upon the same ground, that he also proceeds from the Son.

This is a subject that is utterly inscrutable to us, and is not clearly revealed; and therefore, to speculate or dogmatise, is arrogant presumption. Is it not enough for us to know that he is called the Spirit of Christ because he is promised, given, and poured out by him, and because he does his work, communicates his grace, image, and likeness to those in whom he dwells?

There are various modes of expression used to denote the manner in which the Father communicates the Holy Spirit.

First. He is said to be given of God the Father. The passages are numerous in which this mode of expression is used. "Your heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him," Luke xi. 13. "The Father shall give you another Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost," John xiv. 26. He is therefore to be regarded as the gift of God's unspeakable love, bestowed freely, without respect to the merit or desert of the receiver.

Secondly. The Father is said to send the Holy Spirit. "The Father will send the Holy Ghost in my name. . . I will send unto you the Comforter from the Father." This mode of expression, which usually refers to local motion, is doubtless intended to teach us, that the Holy Spirit is communicated for a special work and purpose." As a creature cannot produce any effects where it is not, until it either be sent thither, or go thither of its own

accord ; so the Holy Ghost produceth not the blessed effects of his power and grace, but in and towards them unto whom he is given, and sent by the Father.*

Thirdly. The Father is said to minister the Spirit, (Gal. iii. 5.) The meaning of this expression seems to be, that God is giving out supplies of grace continually by his Spirit. It is in this way that God meets the wants of his people, and supplies all their need according to the riches of his glory by Jesus Christ.

Fourthly. The Father is said to put his Spirit upon men. "Behold my servant whom I uphold ; I have put my Spirit upon him." This, perhaps, may be intended to indicate the purpose of God to render effectual the communication of the Holy Spirit for the work and the purpose for which he is given.

Fifthly. God is frequently said to pour out his Spirit ; a beautiful and significant metaphorical expression, in which the communication of the Divine influences is compared to the continual rising and overflowing of the waters of a living spring. When used by the prophets, it has a special reference to gospel times, to the dispensation of the Spirit. Dr. Owen is of opinion, that while this expression denotes an eminent act of bounty, it "has respect to the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and not unto his person. For when he is given, he is given absolutely ; and, as to himself, not more nor less ; but his gifts and graces may be more plentifully and abundantly given at one time than at another,—to some persons, than to others. Wherefore this expression is metonymical, that being spoken of the cause which is proper to the effect ; the Spirit being said to be poured forth because his groans are so." *

III. The terms in which the Holy Spirit speaks of his own actings in his application of himself and of his work to the souls of men, are the following. The actions spoken of are such as belong to a free agent.

I pass by here the proceeding from the Father, or what has been called the procession of the Holy Ghost, founded on John xv. 26, "The Spirit of truth which

* Owen on the Dispensation of the Spirit.

† Ibid.

proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me." I would rather refer to his proceeding from the Father in his official character, as the sanctifier of God's elect, and as a voluntary agent. He comes of himself to execute the counsels of infinite wisdom and love. "If I go not away, the Comforter will not come." It is by his own consent that the Holy Spirit works in accordance with the will and the counsels of the Father. While he is sent by the Father, he delights to come and glorify Christ, and to lead sinful men to unite in giving him all honour and glory.

One of the expressions used in scripture to denote the communication of the Spirit, is his falling upon men. "While Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them who heard the word," Acts x. 44. The gift came without any expectation of it, and suddenly surprised those on whom it was bestowed. Thus it was at the beginning of the gospel dispensation, when the Holy Spirit was poured forth upon the Jews, and afterwards on the Gentiles, in the house of Cornelius. He is said also to rest on the persons to whom he is given, Isa. xi. 3; 1 Pet. iv. 14. This expression seems to denote his abiding and continuing with complacency and delight.

When he is said to depart from and to be taken from persons, we are to understand that he ceases to work in them and on them as formerly. His departure from Saul was total; his departure or withdrawal from believers is partial, and but for a season. He never utterly forsakes them; he will abide in them as a well of water springing up unto everlasting life. He may leave them to spiritual decays and weakness, so that the things that remain are ready to die. They may, like David, have reason to mourn on account of the hiding of God's countenance. But they will experience the fulfilment of the promise, "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from them, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail," Psalm lxxxix. 33.

We shall now consider the administration of the Spirit, as he is the author of spiritual being, spiritual life, and true holiness. That he is the author of spiritual being,

or of the new nature communicated in regeneration, and expressed in scripture by various terms, will be hereafter fully shown. In the meantime, I observe, that this is fully proved by the words of our Lord: "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit," John iii. 6. It is not the spirit of man, but something which, through supernatural power, is superadded to it; it is the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness. This production is immediately from God, is called his image, and a Divine nature, 2 Pet. i. 4. It is a pure creation, and is destined for immortality.

The author of this production, wherever it exists, is the Holy Spirit. To him are ascribed all those gracious effects which, in human nature, are the results of the dispensation of redeeming mercy. Without alluding here to the influence of this Divine Spirit on the natural world, in producing its various aspects of beauty and grandeur, I shall only observe that these, and all the phenomena which are exhibited to our senses, are attributed to him, Psalm civ. 30; Job xxvi. 13.

As the Spirit of grace, he has undertaken the renovation and sanctification of fallen human nature; and to his operation we trace the holy desires and heavenly affections which, at any time, are found in man. "Looking down upon this forlorn world, and beholding all things waste and ruined; nature, the best masterpiece of the creation, grown degenerate, depraved, a poisonous and horrid thing; pity and compassion has been stirred up to the world, and that immense Spirit hath gone forth full of love and goodness, full of vital influence, being designed to the office of doing a blessed work, here and there, wherever it finds its work to lie; and that the new creation might be made to spring up out of the wastes and desolations of the old. As a Spirit of grace, we must understand it very intent upon the work, and highly pleased with it. As a Spirit of power, we must suppose it to go on in this work with efficacy, and to crown it with most certain and glorious success. It will not be baffled out of its work, or suffer itself to be put beside its office, unto which it hath been designed and appointed. Wherever we find the state of our souls

bettered, and anything done to form and prepare meet subjects for God's kingdom, we are taught to ascribe all such work to this blessed Spirit." *

Is the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ a part of this work? He is on this account called the Spirit of knowledge, of wisdom, and of revelation, Isa. xi. 2; Eph. i. 17. Is faith, which is the gift of God, an effect of his operation? He is the Spirit of faith. Is love an element in that work which he produces in the souls of men? He is the Spirit of love, by whom the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts. Are we saved by hope? It is by the power of the Holy Ghost that believers are made to abound in this grace, Rom. xv. 13. Is joy in God a principle of the new creation? This also is communicated by the Holy Spirit, Rom. xiv. 17. Is the fear of the Lord characteristic of all those in whom he dwells? He is called the Spirit of the fear of the Lord. All the graces of the Christian character are communicated by him: for the fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance, Gal. v. 22. Whatever saving conviction of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment, is produced in the hearts and consciences of men, it is by him, John xvi. 7—10. Whatever consolations are communicated, whatever earnest and foretastes of the heavenly inheritance, whatever assurance of the love of God,—they are from him who, in his people, is the source of all comfort, and peace, and blessedness.

Thus, the Holy Spirit works in the souls of men that great and entire change which in scripture is called a new birth and a new creation.

But as we are indebted to God the Creator for our natural being, and also for its continual maintainance; so, we owe, not only our spiritual being to the divine Spirit, but the perpetual communication of heavenly life. It is of all who are born again it is said, "You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and in sins," Eph. ii. 1. They all can say with the apostles, "I am

* Howe on the Work of the Holy Spirit.

crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me : and the life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and who gave himself for me," Gal. ii. 20. This life includes in it the continued being and the vigorous exercise of those vital principles which are the fruits of the Spirit ; the consolations and the joys of the hidden life. It is through the Spirit that this life is maintained, and that the Saviour performs his promises : " Because I live, ye shall live also. . . I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish ; neither shall any pluck them out of my hands," John x. 29.

This life is maintained in the soul by the influence of the Spirit—an influence most free and sovereign in its operation,—most constant in its sustaining power,—silent, but powerful in its working, bringing the whole man under its sway,—tending to improve and perfect the soul, and causing it to grow up to the measure of the stature of a man in Christ Jesus. This divine and constantly-working influence is secured to believers by the paternal love of their heavenly Father, by that everlasting love which can never fail ; by their union to Christ with whom is the residue of the Spirit, and in whom it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell. Being joined to the Lord, they are one Spirit, 1 Cor. vi. 17 ; and being one with Him who is rich, and who lives, and with whom is the fountain of life, all the members of his body must partake of that Spirit of life which flows from him.

The Holy Spirit is not only the author of spiritual being and the maintainer of spiritual life, but the source of all holy feeling and action. To be in the Spirit, is to experience the light, consolation, and power of the Spirit, Rev. i. 10. It is to walk in the light of the Lord, as the children of light. To be led by the Spirit, is to be moved by his influence, to be directed by his enlightening guidance, and to be conducted by wisdom that cannot err on the path to the heavenly inheritance. It is to live and act under the habitual power of those spiritual principles which are communicated by the Spirit of God ; to grow and increase in spirituality, in faith, and in

holiness. Thus, the commencement, progress, and completion of the work of grace in the regenerate, are from the operation of the Holy Spirit. It is he who begins the good work ; and it is he who performs it until the day of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 6.

In all that he does, in all that he works in us, he acts according to his own will, according to his own infinite wisdom, love, and power. The dispensation of the word, which is his work, may be resisted ; but what he intends by his word to accomplish, cannot be frustrated. If it be so, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves ; and if without Christ we can do nothing, then, whatever spiritual good is produced in us, is to be ascribed to the special operation of God the Holy Spirit, “ who worketh in us both to will and to do of his own good pleasure.”

CHAPTER II.

OF EFFECTUAL CALLING.

THE invitation which is given to mankind by the gospel, is termed their calling, which is twofold, the one external by the word, the other internal by the Spirit. To the former we shall first direct our attention, by shortly stating its nature; showing that by divine authority it is addressed to all mankind; that it is the duty of all who hear it to comply with it; and that there are presented to them the most touching and powerful motives to induce them to do so.

I. Let us distinctly ascertain what is meant by the call of the gospel. The gospel, as the term implies, is good news, as it consists of a message of mercy to the fallen and guilty; in which their righteous sovereign entreats them to be reconciled and to receive forgiveness. It includes a statement of divine truth—that truth which God has revealed for salvation, more especially that which relates to the person, work, and offices of the Redeemer. This truth is declared in the written word, and it is the great object of the Christian preacher fully to make it known. The theme of the ministry of reconciliation, as the apostle informs us, is, that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them;” and those who are entrusted with it are warranted to say, “we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”

The call of the gospel, therefore, comprehends an invitation to spiritual blessings; an invitation issued by sovereign mercy, and enforced by divine authority. This

invitation is expressed in terms of the deepest tenderness and affection; and convey such indubitable evidence of the sincerity and earnestness of their author, as is most calculated to remove the feeling of reluctance from the unwilling mind. In confirmation of this, I shall quote two examples; the one from the Old, the other from the New Testament. "Ho every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread, and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." In similar terms of invitation our Lord says, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

But, in addition to the most urgent invitation, the gospel call includes express command. This command is issued by Him who claims the love of the heart, and who, because he requires nothing more than is right, is entitled to demand compliance with his authority. It is the command of that God who has just cause to be displeased with his rebellious and apostate creatures, and who might have left them to suffer the effects of that wrath which they have incurred; but who, having provided redemption for them, sends out his heralds to charge as well as to invite them to submit to his mercy. He commandeth all men every where to repent; to believe in the light, that they may be the children of light; to believe on him whom God hath sent.

Thus, God deals with mankind, though fallen and

depraved, as rational and accountable creatures, to whom he addresses commands and exhortations, calculated to operate on their nature, and to effect his merciful designs. He expostulates with them, warns them of their guilt and danger, promises pardon and eternal life on their return to him through the Saviour, and calls upon them to comply with his invitation. He reminds them of the unreasonableness, the degradation and misery of their present course, and entreats them with the affection of a father to his children, with the earnestness of the God of salvation for his erring creatures, and with the authority of the Supreme Benefactor and Ruler, to be reconciled to him. Let us now show—

II. That it is the command of God that the call of the gospel should be addressed to all mankind. This appears to me to follow as a necessary consequence, from the nature of those invitations and entreaties to which I have just alluded. The general terms in which they are expressed, evidently imply that they are unrestricted, that they are applicable to sinners without any distinction. The messengers who are sent to invite to gospel blessings are commanded to go, even into the highways, to places where they could meet with persons of every description and character, and to bid to the marriage as many as they may find. They are not required to look to their instructions to ascertain who were excluded from the feast of good things; but they are authorised to ask all, indiscriminately; and to call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind, and those that have no money, to come and enrich themselves with the greatest good.

But the question is completely decided by our Lord's commission to his apostles, and by their proceedings in consequence. "Go ye into all the world," said he, "and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." In this commission every creature, every individual of the human race is included. That the apostles thus understood it, is clear from their mode of acting. They preached repentance and remission of sins to both Jews and Gentiles; affirming that

the Lord had so commanded them ; which was in accordance with the language of prophecy, which had long before foretold that Christ should be a light of the Gentiles, and be for salvation unto the ends of the earth. They felt themselves bound to preach the glad tidings to all to whom they could convey them ; being debtors as to the ministry entrusted to their charge both to the Greeks and the barbarians ; both to the wise and to the unwise.

The duty which they felt of promulgating the gospel to the utmost extent devolves upon Christians in every age. This duty rests upon the divine command—a command which remains in force till all shall know the Lord from the least even to the greatest. Powerful motives present themselves to induce the disciples of the Redeemer to render obedience to this precept. Irrespective of the consideration that it is his will they should do so, compassion to their fellow-creatures, whose spiritual condition without the gospel is deeply distressing, may well stimulate them to the discharge of a duty so truly urgent. Nor do I know on what ground it is possible for professing Christians to satisfy their minds, while they neglect any means within their reach of extending the doctrine of Christ. But I now proceed to show,—

III. That it is the duty of all to whom the external call is addressed, fully and cordially to comply with it. Were it not that facts show the contrary, I should have been disposed to think that it would be unnecessary to prove the truth of a proposition so obvious. If it be the will of God that the gospel should be preached to all mankind, does it not follow that it is the duty of all who hear it to believe and obey it ? If, as we have seen, they are exhorted, invited, and commanded, to believe in Christ to the saving of the soul, are they not bound to yield compliance, and to exercise that repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ, which are declared to be necessary unto salvation ? Why, then, should the scriptures abound with exhortations, in which sinners in a state of unregeneracy are required to hearken to the divine counsels ; to hear instruction, and

be wise; to seek the Lord while he may be found, and to call upon him while he is near; to labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life? Do not these, and similar expressions, imply exercises of mind very different from a mere attendance on the means of grace, and an external and decorous profession of the truth? Do they not command those to whom they are addressed, to return to God in the only way of acceptance, that they may live? Are not they, consequently violating this command, who continue impenitent and unbelieving under the gospel?

The truth of the position, that it is the duty of all to whom the call of the gospel is addressed to comply with it, may be fully proved by the following particulars.

First, every rational and accountable creature is bound to give implicit credit to the testimony of God. This is an obligation from which no being can possibly be exempted who is possessed of understanding and will. In regard to a mere abstract problem, that has no relation to the state of the heart, and our treatment of which involves no moral duty, I admit that we have no control over our belief; we yield our assent, or withhold it, just as we perceive evidence for its truth. It is otherwise, wherever the affections and will are concerned; as they are most deeply in reference to those things which God has revealed in his word regarding his character and our condition, the provision which he has made for his own glory in connexion with human redemption. Here, a cordial acquiescence and compliance is a moral obligation; is a duty which we owe to the God and Father of all; and unbelief, or a refusal to give credit to his testimony, is a most aggravated sin.

This duty, the duty of fully and cordially believing the gospel, is, in fact, required by the moral law,—the law which commands us to love the Lord our God with all the heart, and mind, and soul, and strength. That all mankind as accountable beings are bound to yield obedience to this law, few, it is presumed, will deny. But is it not implied, in loving God supremely, that he is loved in those characters in which his moral excellencies are

most clearly displayed? If he be truly loved as Creator, will not his glorious perfections be equally loved and admired as Preserver? and as Redeemer, the character in which he unfolds them with brightest lustre? If God be loved with the whole heart on account of the glorious excellencies of his nature, and this is the chief ground on which he claims our first regard, he must surely be loved in consideration of these divine excellencies, in whatever way they are made known. Most of all will the affections of the heart be drawn forth towards him when he exhibits his wondrous wisdom, love and mercy in the gift of his Son; and when, that he may save mankind from guilt and ruin, he delivers him up to the death for us all. It was on this principle that the angels who shouted for joy at the creation of the world, showed the deepest interest in regard to the mysteries of redemption, when descending to Bethlehem they sang, "Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, and good will towards men."

In like manner, would all mankind eagerly receive the gospel, and give it that cordial heartfelt welcome which is unto salvation, if they possessed that love to God which the law requires. This would lead them to comply without hesitation with the heavenly call, and to cleave with full purpose of heart to the Divine Redeemer. As soon as they should hear of him they would obey him; and as the image of the invisible God, through whom his nature and perfections are displayed, they would immediately honour him by trusting in him, even as they profess to honour the Father. It is not more evident that they are bound to love God at all, than that they are bound to love him in the glorious character of the God of salvation, in which he has revealed himself; and that, consequently, it is a duty of imperious obligation to believe with the heart unto righteousness, and to receive the truth in the love of it, that they may be saved. Hence our Lord, when accounting for the unbelief of the Jews, assigns the want of love to God as the cause: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. I am come in my Father's name, and ye

receive me not. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only."

In the second place, compliance with the call of the gospel is an act of obedience which the declared will of God demands. Though we must never forget that the message of salvation has issued from the free and sovereign grace of God, its promulgation as obviously imposes a duty on those to whom it is addressed, as though it were expressly required by an edict. The mere statement of it as a revelation of mercy from God, the Supreme Ruler, to mankind, his rebellious subjects, implies, on their part, the obligation of grateful attention, and of cordial reception. If it be an embassy, the object of which is the reconciliation to God of those to whom it is sent, can we doubt whether it be their duty to yield obedience, to relinquish their unnatural hostility, and to accept of the proffered peace? Are not all men as expressly commanded to repent and to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, as they are to love the Lord God with the whole heart, and mind, and soul? Both duties are enjoined with equal clearness, and are enforced by the same Divine authority; and on what principle can we be excused from rendering obedience to the one, while we are chargeable with guilt for the violation of the other? On the contrary, is it not declared, that eternal destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power, will be inflicted upon those who obey not the gospel?

The numerous express commands addressed in scripture to unconverted sinners to comply with the call of the gospel, clearly show that their doing so is an act of obedience required by the will of God. Why should they have been issued, if they did not impose an obligation fully to comply with them? If they did not imply the duty of obedience on the part of mankind, we may rest assured that no such injunctions would have been found in a message sent to them from the God of infinite wisdom, holiness, and truth. "How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity, and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn ye at my

reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye, and believe the gospel. Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out. Repent, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee."

In the third place, there is nothing in the obedience which these commands require, but what accords with the dictates of reason and wisdom. They call upon mankind in a state of alienation from God, and of rebellion against him, to renounce their wickedness, to accept of the atonement as the only ground on which their guilt can be remitted, and thus to be admitted to the favour of God, and to a participation in all the blessings of immortal happiness. The end for which they are required to turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, is, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified by faith in Christ. They are commanded to believe on Christ, because their doing otherwise is a justification of their apostacy from God, a wilful persisting in the road to ruin, and a rejection of that only name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved. There is more than mere duty in yielding obedience to such a requirement,—a requirement addressed to the hopes, fears, and desires of the human mind, and calculated to excite these active principles into immediate operation: it is a privilege of a high order to be permitted to do so, since it forms the entrance to the possession of the promises of grace, with which we are assured that our state is happy and safe, that all things become ours, because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

It is unnecessary to say, that enlightened reason and wisdom give their approval to this cordial compliance with the command of the gospel. There is in this nothing weak or foolish; nothing unsuited to the nature

and condition of man ; while, on the contrary, it accords with the dictates of his conscience, and meets his most enlarged desires after happiness. No person, therefore, to whom the word of salvation has been sent can justify his unregeneracy and impenitence to his own mind, or can render to himself any satisfactory reason why he has delayed obeying that call of mercy which it is his privilege to hear. His excuses even to the view of his own impartial judgment for postponing an act of such unutterable importance, required by the love, mercy, and authority of God, and involving his well-being through eternity, would appear when fully examined, only as so many circumstances of aggravation.

In the fourth place, the required obedience of the gospel is what God may justly demand from mankind as rational and accountable creatures ; because there is nothing in it but what such beings, if they are truly willing, may perform. If their inability to repent and believe the gospel arose from natural causes—from such a derangement of the mental faculties, for example, as takes place in insanity,—it would be absurd to address commands to them as moral agents, because of their physical incapacity to comply with them. Had we been required, while destitute of the organs of vision to behold the sun, the command would have been cruel and unjust, and no righteous judge would condemn us, because obedience, in such a case, would be an utter impossibility. If man had been void of either understanding or will, those faculties by which he is constituted a moral agent, it would have been as incongruous to address to him exhortations, promises, and commands, as to bid the deaf to hear, or the dead to walk. Nor would it be less absurd, if the inability of sinners were of this nature, to urge them to repent, and to flee from the wrath to come ; duties which from the want of natural powers, they could not perform.

That it is not of this nature, however, is clear from the fact, that God, the righteous Judge, in addressing mankind uses arguments, invitations, and commands, and that he expressly requires them to love him, to fear him, to trust in him, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ

that they may be saved. They disobey these injunctions, not because they are in themselves difficult to be performed, or are placed beyond their natural powers, but because they are disinclined to them and are in heart alienated from God. It is to this, and to nothing else, that the scriptures attribute the impenitence and unbelief of mankind. "I have spread my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts; a people that provoketh me to anger continually to my face." "Ye will not come to me," said our Saviour to the Jews, "that ye might have life." "The carnal mind is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be: so they that are in the flesh cannot please God." Here solely lies the inability of man to turn to God. Had it arisen from the want of natural power, he would not have been the subject of moral obligation. His being blameworthy and liable to punishment for refusing to comply with the call of the gospel presupposes a natural ability to do so; and clearly proves that the cause of disobedience is in the enmity of the heart.

This is a distinction which all perfectly understand, and of which they avail themselves in the ordinary affairs of life. When any one is accused of injuring the interests of others, how does he attempt to palliate if not to excuse his conduct? Is it not by alleging that his will was not concerned in inflicting the supposed injury, and that he had no intention of doing it? Or, if a servant be found fault with by his master for neglecting his duty, does he not think it a sufficient vindication of his conduct if he can with truth affirm that he was utterly unable, however willing, to do it at that time? No sane person would ever think of offering as an apology that his dislike to his master extended to his employment, and rendered him careless in its performance. It is only in religion, and in regard to their Maker, that men act this absurd part; and that they forget, or are willing to do so, the essential difference between an inability which is owing to their inclination, and one that is totally independent.

Surely, then, man is not the less bound to repent and to believe to the saving of the soul, because of his reluctance and unwillingness to do so. How justly does God demand from him obedience in heart and an affection to the gospel, and regard his non-compliance with its call as an act of rebellion against his authority, which he has threatened to visit with the most awful tokens of his displeasure, even with everlasting punishment! This leads me to remark,

In the fifth place, that disobedience to the call of the gospel is represented in scripture as originating in depravity, and as a crime of the most aggravated nature. The ignorance, blindness, and unbelief of mankind, are spoken of as voluntary and consequently criminal. Those to whom the gospel is hid, who have no spiritual discernment of its excellency, nor relish for its blessings, are said to have their minds blinded by the god of this world, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. The want of cordial acquiescence in the plan of redeeming mercy, and of such a reception of its blessings as saving faith implies, are ascribed to the operation of those evil principles which characterise corrupt nature. It is owing to pride that the wicked do not with the feelings of humble suppliants sue for mercy and seek after God: the absence of an honest heart is the reason given why three classes of hearers, mentioned in the parable of the sower, did not receive the word so as to bring forth fruit. A thorough aversion and disinclination to holiness is assigned by our Lord as the cause of his being rejected by the Jews to whom he addressed his words. "Because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not. If I say the truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth God's words; ye, therefore, hear them not, because ye are not of God. Why do ye not understand my speech? Because ye cannot hear my word."

Do not these interrogations clearly imply that the unbelief of mankind proceeds from the corruption of the heart; that this renders the doctrine of Christ disagreeable to them; and that but for this they would gladly receive it. To this it is owing that they harden their

hearts against the fear and love of God; that their whole life is a course of hostility against the gospel which calls them to repentance; that they are obdurate while a crucified Saviour cries to them from his cross to yield to his sceptre, and to turn to God; and that they persist in indifference and in disobedience to the commands of mercy in the prospect of death and the great realities of eternity. This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and that men have chosen darkness rather than light, their deeds being evil.

In the sixth place, non-compliance with the call of the gospel is represented as a crime which deserves, and which will meet with, the most awful punishment. This of course presupposes the truth stated in the last particular, namely, that unbelief in Christ is the greatest sin—a sin which pre-eminently disparages the wisdom, love, and mercy of God—which treats with dishonour the mediation of the Redeemer and all the blessings procured by it—and which may be said to seal our perdition, and to render it irrevocable. He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only-begotten Son of God. Wilfully to reject that Divine messenger whom God sent into the world because he loved it, and who by his obedience and death has removed the malediction, and opened up a way to the Father, is a crime which surpasses every other, and the aggravation of which can only be estimated by the Judge of all the earth. It is a refusal of the only expiation for sin, making light of the message of reconciliation, slighting the unspeakable gift, and shutting the only door of hope by which to escape from the wrath to come.

Hence the punishment to be inflicted on the unbeliever is represented as proportionably great; great beyond all the conceptions which can be formed of its nature. Its awfulness is intimated by solemn appeals to our conscience as to the desert of those who reject the offers of grace, and who place themselves out of the reach of mercy. We are repeatedly assured, that its severity will be suited to the worth and magnitude of

the blessings contemned. "If the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?" If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, that is, by refusing fully to comply with the call of the gospel, "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries." "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses; of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace." Nor can the punishment of the finally impenitent be more strongly expressed by any language than by that which our Lord is represented as using when he comes to judgment,—language which proceeds on the supposition of his right to the unreserved submission of every creature, and of its being the duty of all to whom the gospel call is addressed, heartily to obey it. "But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me."

That this punishment is justly merited none will question who admit that the Judge of all the earth will do right. But, it is clear, that in proportion to the extent of their blameworthiness for neglecting the salvation of the gospel, was the duty of cordially embracing it. If this obligation were not of the strongest nature, the guilt incurred by its violation could not be of that aggravated character which will draw down from the Righteous Governor of the universe the heaviest doom. "He that believeth on the Son hath life; he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

The duty of a full and immediate compliance with the command of the gospel will appear in a light, if possible, still stronger, by attending to the touching and powerful

motives to do so which it presents. But the consideration of these we must for the present defer. In the mean time, I cannot refrain from expressing surprise at the indifference, and apparent security and ease, with which multitudes treat this awfully important question. They seem to resign themselves to a kind of fatalism, under the influence of which they lull themselves to repose, in the expectation that without any concern on their part all may be well at last. Why act like rational and accountable beings in the affairs of this life, and so much otherwise in regard to religion? A message from God has been sent unto them, in which he addresses each personally on matters of infinite moment; but, in consequence of their disinclination to give it a cordial entertainment, they postpone its consideration: they make light of it, and give to the farm and the merchandise the preference.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AN ADVOCATE.

THE most cheering promise which our Lord gave to his disciples before his departure into heaven was in these words: "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him." John xiv. 16, 17. "It is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you: and when he is come, he will convince the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment." John xvi. 7—10.

The name which is here given to the Holy Spirit (*Παράκλητος*,) signifies an advocate as well as a comforter. As applied to the Saviour it is rendered advocate, 1 John ii. 1. The apostle refers to his intercession, the foundation of which was the atoning sacrifice which he offered on earth. The Holy Spirit in the exercise of his office in the economy of redemption acts as an advocate as well as a comforter.

We shall first consider the way in which he acts as an advocate or intercessor. Our advocate with the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ alone; he is the only mediator between God and man. When the Holy Spirit makes intercession in us, it is by enabling us to make intercession according to the mind and the will of God. Rom. viii. 26.

The Holy Spirit pleads the cause of Christ in and by believers against the world: first, by giving them courage, and by suggesting arguments in defence of the truth. He has enabled them with boldness, liberty of speech, and unshaken fidelity, to plead the cause of Christ before their ad-

versaries. This was remarkably the case with the apostles and first Christians, who witnessed a good confession when called to answer before kings and rulers for their adherence to the faith and the doctrine of Christ. Hence the promise which had been previously given to them by our Lord: "When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay, nor resist." Matt. x. 18—20; Luke xxi. 15. It was thus that men who had been accounted ignorant and unlearned acted with such boldness and courage before the rulers of their country, as confounded the men of legal wisdom on the judgment-seat. "When they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marvelled," Acts iv. 13.

In this point of view the advocacy of the Holy Spirit has continued with the followers of Christ until now. When we survey the history of the church, we find in every age, instances of persons who, though in humble circumstances, and unaccustomed to dangers, in the face of kings and rulers, of prisons and tortures, have been enabled to plead the cause of Divine truth with courage and success. Their fears and despondency with which they looked forward to the trial were removed, and to their own surprise they have found that their reason, skill, and wisdom, were elevated to correspond with the occasion.

I pass over here the advocacy of the Holy Spirit in the extraordinary and ordinary gifts which he has communicated, and which have been employed for the confirmation and the defence of the gospel. I observe,—

Secondly. That he pleads the cause of Christ by the internal efficacy which he gives to the ministration of the word. This is expressly declared by our Lord in the following words: "When he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment. Of sin, because they believe not on me. Of righteousness,

because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more. Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged." The Holy Spirit was to plead the cause of Christ in the hearts and consciences of his adversaries with such power and effect that they should have nothing to reply. Their mouths were to be stopped, and they were to pronounce themselves guilty before God. In consequence of this overpowering conviction of sin produced on the audience of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, "they were pricked in their hearts, and cried out, Men and brethren, what shall we do?" The advocacy of the Holy Spirit accompanied the apostolic ministry, and rendered it mighty for the "pulling down of strong-holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ," 2 Cor. x. 4, 5.

This Divine advocacy has always continued, more or less, to accompany the truth of the gospel. The conviction of sin produced has been deep, humbling, and accompanied with godly sorrow; and has led those who have been under its influence eagerly and gratefully to receive Jesus Christ, as "made of God unto them wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption." This convincing efficacy of the word through which multitudes are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, has often been the occasion of calling forth more strongly the enmity and the rage of the wicked. Thus, when the Holy Spirit advocated the cause of Christ through Stephen, and gave him a mouth and wisdom which his adversaries were not able to gain-say nor resist, "they were cut to the heart, and gnashed on him with their teeth," Acts vii. 54.

In pleading the cause of Christ with the world, the Holy Spirit bears testimony concerning him—concerning his Divine dignity, character, and mission;—concerning his personal and official righteousness; and concerning the judgment which, through the influence of the prince of this world, had been passed upon him.

I. The Holy Spirit, as an advocate for Christ, asserts his Divine dignity, character, and mission. This he did,

partly, by conferring special honour on the redeeming work which he finished. Soon after our Lord's ascension into heaven, he came down on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and so convinced three thousand of the persons then assembled at Jerusalem, of their sin, and of their need of redemption, that they immediately received Christ as the only Redeemer. In spite of their Jewish prepossessions, they renounced their own righteousness, and rested all their hopes of acceptance on the righteousness which is by faith of Jesus Christ. This was the effect of the special operation of that Divine Spirit who delighted to honour him, who, for the salvation of sinful men, "humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

The Holy Spirit bore testimony to the Divine character and mission of Christ, by leading men to believe on him by the convincing evidence which he furnished, that "he is truly the Son of God." "When the Comforter (or the Advocate) is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me," John xv. 26. The points in dispute between the Jews and our Lord were, the Divine dignity of his nature, and the Divine authority of his mission. They denied his claims as the Son of God and the Saviour of the world; and they condemned him to death as a blasphemer. His claims were to be fully vindicated by the interposition of the Holy Spirit, who came down to convince men of their great criminality in rejecting the Son of God.

Jesus had himself established his claims to this Divine character by the works which he did, and especially by his resurrection from the dead, an event which proved him to be the Son of God with power. But, notwithstanding these mighty signs and wonders, the Jews attempted to justify their rejection of the Redeemer, and to persist in their unbelief. How was this controversy to be terminated? Was it by the advocacy of the fishermen of Galilee? What effect could man produce without learning, without power, without influence, without any of those acquirements which have weight with mankind? It was the Holy Spirit who was effec-

tually to plead the cause of Christ. He did so by the communication of miraculous powers to the apostles, and by accompanying their ministry by such undeniable evidences and testimonies as convinced mankind of the sin of unbelief, and opened their eyes to the truth and the glory of Christ. He did so, by such powerful and successful pleading in their hearts and consciences, as made multitudes willing to bow to the sceptre of the Redeemer, and publicly to own him as their Lord and Saviour.

In advocating the cause and the claims of the Redeemer, the Holy Spirit still continues. It is he who truly convinces men of sin, humbles them in their own eyes on account of it, produces that godly sorrow which worketh repentance unto salvation, and leads them to look upon Him whom they have pierced. It is he who unites the soul thus humbled unto Christ, and communicates the most exalted views of his Divine dignity, and his perfect righteousness. He thus continues to glorify Christ, by taking of the things that are his, and showing them in all their beauty and loveliness to believers.

II. The Holy Spirit continues to plead with men as to the personal and official righteousness of Christ. "He shall convince the world of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more." Christ was personally treated as an evil-doer, despised and rejected of men, accused and condemned as a malefactor. He who had continually gone about doing good, was scorned, and reproached as a deceiver. The Holy Spirit here interposed, also, to vindicate and plead his cause, by declaring, through the apostles, that Jesus did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; that he fulfilled all righteousness, and was throughout holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners. In proof of this, the Holy Spirit affirmed, and proved his affirmation by the mighty signs and wonders which were wrought through the instrumentality of apostolic men, that God had raised him from the dead, and had shown his approbation of him, and delight in him, by taking him up to glory. He was no more seen in his state of humiliation, for he had gloriously ascended to the Father—the highest possible

proof that the Father was well pleased with his righteousness, and that by his perfect obedience he had magnified the law, and had made it honourable.

The righteousness which, as the Surety of his people, he had wrought out for them was also testified to by the Holy Spirit. He was revealed by the prophets as the Lord our righteousness; as the Anointed One who should bring in everlasting righteousness. He was announced by the apostles as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth; as the author of that Divine righteousness which is without the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe, Rom. x. 4; iii. 21, 22. The Holy Spirit has so convinced men of the impossibility of obtaining a righteousness of their own in which to appear before God, that they have been shut up to the righteousness of Christ. They have been taught utterly to renounce their own, and to rest all their hopes upon this.

V III. The Holy Spirit pleads the cause of Christ in reference to the judgment which, through the influence of the prince of this world, has been passed upon him. He was to convince the world of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged. In the judgment that had been passed upon Christ by the world when he was condemned to death, Satan had the principal hand: for it had been pronounced in the hour, and under the power of darkness. In that hour the god of this world seemed to triumph: he had succeeded in inducing the Jewish rulers to crucify the Lord of glory, and to kill the Prince of life. This was the judgment of this world, — a judgment which the world was disposed to justify and make good.

But the Holy Spirit, who advocated the cause of Christ, so effectually pleaded in the hearts and consciences of men, that this judgment was reversed. It recoiled upon Satan himself, who was judged, and whose usurped dominion was overturned. Through the gospel, by the demonstration of the Spirit, his pretences and artifices were exposed; idolatry, will-worship, and super-

stition, were subverted; and the exalted Redeemer was adored and honoured as Lord of all.

The Holy Spirit still continues to plead the cause of Christ by the mouth of his chosen witnesses. It is He who is to remove, by his mighty power, all remaining impediments to the progress of the gospel, and to bring in the happy time when nothing shall remain to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain, and when "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." *

* Isaiah, xi. 9.

CHAPTER IV.

REGENERATION: IN WHAT IT DOES NOT CONSIST.

REGENERATION is a term which denotes the saving change that is wrought in the soul of man by the efficacious power of the Holy Spirit, by which a vital principle is introduced, and a Divine nature formed, which continue their operation, and increase their ascendancy, till the work of grace is consummated in glory. This great change, both in regard to its nature and necessity, is explicitly taught in many parts of scripture. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee," said our Lord to Nicodemus, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." "Therefore," says the apostle Paul, "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are past away, behold! all things are become new. Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Whosoever," says the apostle John, "believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God. As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John iii. 5; 2 Cor. v. 17.

From these and other passages of scripture we learn the greatness of that change which is effected on the soul of man in regeneration. It is spoken of as the beginning of a new existence, the creation of almighty power, a transition from darkness to light, a resurrection from the dead. The language is often figurative; because the subject is profound. But the meaning of this appropriate and impressive phraseology is fully ex-

plained by the sacred writers themselves; for they vary the metaphor in order to show more clearly the import of the thing signified. They express this mighty change produced by the Holy Spirit by allusions to such natural changes as are calculated to suggest to the mind the idea of new existence. Nor do they leave us in doubt as to the grounds on which this renovation of nature and principle is essentially necessary. They assume the fact, that man has apostatised from the Fountain of purity and holiness;—that his nature has become depraved in consequence of the fall;—that it can be restored to its original glory only by the power of the Holy Spirit;—that the change effected by His mighty power is complete and universal; and that it finally issues in perfect holiness and happiness. The change which is thus accomplished is so great, that the person who is the subject of it is said to be a new creation, to be born again, to be raised from the dead, to have passed from death unto life, to be translated from the kingdom of Satan into that of God's dear Son, to be turned from darkness into light, and from the power of sin unto God.

Regeneration differs from conversion as the cause does from the effect. The former is prior to the latter, as life must precede motion. In regeneration spiritual life is communicated; and the effect of this quickening from death in sin is turning unto God. It is after God puts his Spirit within us so as to give us a new heart, that we walk in his statutes, and keep his commandments and do them. It is in the day of God's power that the people are made willing; but in the order of nature the power must be experienced before they voluntarily bow to the Redeemer's sceptre, and flee to him as their refuge and their hope. Regeneration is the work of God in us; but conversion is the turning of the regenerated soul to God in the exercise of faith and repentance.

Regeneration also differs from justification. Both these expressions denote a great and important change; but regeneration is an inward change of nature and disposition; as when a man who is dead is raised from death unto life;—justification is a relative change by which a man is brought from a state of guilt to a state

of righteousness, from being under condemnation and exposed to wrath, to the possession of liberty and the privilege of God's children. When justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ, we are freed from guilt, and have a title to life; when regenerated, we are delivered from the power of sin, and are in part restored to the image of God. We are justified by the blood of Christ, by the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone; the sole ground of the one is without us; the source of the other is the immediate operation of the Spirit, and it is effected by a real change within us. The one is the judicial act of God, accomplished instantaneously when we believe; the other is a work of God's grace whereby we are renewed in the whole man after the image of God, and as the consequence, are enabled more and more to die unto sin, and live unto righteousness.

Regeneration also differs from sanctification, not only as the commencement of a work differs from its progress, but as the one is instantaneous and produced by the power of the Spirit, the other is gradual, and is carried on under the guidance of the Holy Spirit through various means. We are created anew by the Spirit of God infusing faith into us; but we are sanctified by the faith thus bestowed. Regeneration is the communication of new principles; sanctification is the exercise and growth of these principles. As erroneous notions have been entertained concerning the nature of regeneration, it may be proper that we should first show in what it does not consist, before we attempt to describe its character.

I. Regeneration consists not in baptism, nor is it inseparably connected with it. I should not have considered it necessary to mention this, were it not that baptismal regeneration, as it is termed, has advocates not merely in Roman Catholics, but in some of the ministers of a Protestant church. The doctrine they hold on this subject is, that to all persons by baptism duly administered, the grace of God's Holy Spirit certainly is bestowed, enabling them to perform the conditions of piety and virtue then undertaken by them; the which gift, if not abused, ill-treated, driven away, or quenched by their

ill-behaviour, will be perpetually continued, improved, and increased.*

This doctrine is opposed to scripture, contradicted by fact, and productive of very injurious consequences, by inducing many to believe that as they have been baptised, they have been regenerated, and have experienced the change which our Lord declares to be necessary to an admission into the kingdom of God. Have not many been baptised, who have never seriously inquired into their spiritual condition, who have had no permanent convictions of sin, nor desire of deliverance from it; who are unconcerned about the favour of God, who refuse compliance with the call of the gospel, who neglect the instituted means of grace, and seek not the influences of the Holy Spirit? But are not those whom Christ invites to him described as weary and heavy laden? Are not those whose state is safe represented as repenting of all sin, as believing on the Lord Jesus Christ; as contrite and humble; as spiritually minded and in consequence enjoying life and peace; as overcoming the world, without which they cannot have the love of the Father in them; as loving the brethren and thus giving evidence that they have passed from death unto life; as giving all diligence to make their calling and election sure, that so an entrance may be ministered unto them abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of God our Saviour; as new creatures in Christ Jesus, old things having passed away, and all things having become new.

While regeneration by the Holy Spirit is spoken of in numerous passages of scripture, there are not more than three in which it can be supposed that baptism is alluded to in connection with regeneration. I say supposed, for to me it appears evident that two of these three have no reference to baptism. The first is Titus iii. 5; "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Sa-

* This is the doctrine held by one class of ministers in the Church of England.

viour.” There is no allusion to baptism in the expression, “by the washing of regeneration;” it denotes the great and saving change produced on the nature of man by the Spirit of God, by which he is cleansed as in a laver from the defilement of sin; and hence the apostle adds the words, “renewing of the Holy Ghost,” to intimate both the nature of the change and the agency by which it is accomplished. The common emblem of the influence of the Spirit is water; to wash with which is the sign of the personal application of the purifying blood of Christ. Hence, the frequent allusion to this well-known emblem of Divine influence. “Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness, and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.” This phraseology is the current language of the Bible in reference to regeneration. For example,—“I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.—Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.—Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.—If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.—But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

The other passage which is supposed to countenance baptismal regeneration, but which appears to me to have no reference to the ordinance of baptism, is the address of our Lord to Nicodemus, in which he says, “Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” It has already been remarked, that water is the common emblem of the regenerating and sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit; in the words of our Lord just quoted, the well known sign, and the thing signified, are mentioned in the same connection. The Holy Spirit, in regeneration, produces a similar effect in purifying the soul from defilement of sin which water does in cleansing from bodily pollution. Phraseology of a like nature is used by John the Bap-

tist when he says respecting Christ, "He shall baptise you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire; that is, the effect of the renewing of the Holy Ghost in his powerful operation upon human nature resembles that of fire upon metals in refining them from their dross.

But, even though it were admitted that the expression, "born of water," does refer to baptism, the external sign of regeneration, it is most certain that no such doctrine as that of baptismal regeneration can be founded on these words of our Lord.

For, in the first place, it is expressly affirmed, that all who are not born again cannot enter into the kingdom of God; and, consequently, that they shall be excluded from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. But who would venture to assert, that all who are not baptised with water, in consequence of the circumstances of their birth, or of their dying before this ordinance was administered to them, shall be shut out from eternal life? A conclusion involving a tenet so absurd and revolting, and opposed to the spirit and to the letter of Divine revelation, proves its anti-scriptural character, and that the premises from which it is deduced are unsound. Though our Lord says, "He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved," he restricts the other part of the proposition, in which he refers to the character and condemnation of those who perish, to the unbeliever. In this declaration, infants are not included, since they are alike incapable of believing or of disbelieving. But they are capable of being regenerated by the Holy Spirit; and, as the consequence, of being admitted into the kingdom of God, whether they are partakers of baptism or not. They are not only capable of being the subjects of regeneration, but they require this great change before they can be admitted into the regions of perfect holiness and happiness; and we therefore maintain, that it is to this, and not to baptism, that our Lord refers in his address to Nicodemus.

In the second place, our Lord's censuring of Nicodemus, proves that no such doctrine is here taught as baptismal regeneration. He upbraids him because that, though he was a teacher in Israel, he understood not the

things which he taught. But how could he be blameable for being unacquainted with the nature and necessity of Christian baptism—an ordinance which was not then instituted? His being a master in Israel formed no reason why he should have understood better than others, the nature and importance of what then had no existence, and of what he could not before have heard. Whereas, he was culpable, and deserving of reprehension, in not knowing the necessity of that great spiritual change effected on the soul of man by the Spirit of God, which had been so clearly taught by the prophets. To the language of ignorance and astonishment in which Nicodemus expressed his feelings, saying, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?”—Our Lord, doubtless, would have replied, had he designed to teach the doctrine of baptismal regeneration, Except a man be baptised, he cannot see the kingdom of God. But how very different is the answer which he actually gave: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of the water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.” He further explained his meaning by showing that he intended a spiritual birth, produced by Divine power, and that all those who are the subjects of it, are spiritual persons. That which is “born of the flesh, is flesh”—possessing its properties and tendencies: and that which is “born of the Spirit, is Spirit”—like its author, it is spiritual and holy in its nature, and capable of spiritual and holy exercises and enjoyments. As man is impure in mind as well as in body, the nature of his descendants is also impure, corrupt, and alienated from God; and hence our Lord declares that, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh”—like its original, depraved; and that which is “born of the Spirit” is, like its source, spiritual, holy, and heavenly. “Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth; and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit.” Was there not ground to reprehend Nicodemus when he showed ignorance and surprise that fallen man must

undergo the mighty internal change denoted by the words "born again?"

In the third place, we are absolutely certain that baptismal regeneration has no foundation in our Lord's discourse with Nicodemus, because we are assured that persons have entered into the kingdom of God who were not baptised with water. Of this description was the penitent malefactor, to whom our Lord said, "This day shalt thou be with me in paradise." As he was admitted into heaven without baptism; and as our Lord declares that no one can be received into heaven who is not born of the water and the Spirit,—it is demonstrably evident, that being born of water and of the Spirit does not consist in the external ordinance of baptism, and that it is not inseparably connected with the administration of that sign and seal of the covenant of grace.

In the fourth place, it is certain that persons have been baptised who were not regenerated when the ordinance of baptism was administered to them. Simon Magus, though rightly baptised, had neither part nor lot in the matter, but was in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Was he not still unregenerate, though he had been the subject of the initiatory ordinance of the Christian church? But he could not have been unregenerate if he had experienced the great change denoted by the language of our Lord to Nicodemus, if he had been born again. It is therefore clear, that baptism and the new birth are two distinct and different things; and that the one may, and often does take place without the other.

The only other passage of scripture which has been supposed to favour baptismal regeneration is, 1 Pet. iii. 21, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God; by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Here the apostle expressly declares, that the administration of this ordinance, considered in reference to the element of water used in it, is restricted to external purification; but that it emblematically represents the means of inward purification—the exercise of a good conscience toward God, or a conscience purged from dead works to serve the

living God ; quickened into holy obedience in virtue of the resurrection of Christ. Baptism is the symbolical and sacramental sign of regeneration ; but the sign may, and often does exist, in the absence of the renewing of the Holy Ghost, of which it is the emblem. Regeneration is an act of God's sovereign grace, which, though he accomplishes usually by means, he may effect without them ; and accordingly, they who are the subjects of this saving change are said to be born, not of the will of man, but of God,—to be God's workmanship, created in Christ unto good works.

Circumcision, which, under the law, was the instituted sign of regeneration, was analogous to baptism. Both were designed to be seals of the covenant of grace, and to intimate the depravity of man, and the renewal of the heart by the Holy Ghost. As the one was a seal of the righteousness of faith, so is the other. As the one was administered to the infants of the people of God by his express command, so, in the judgment of the great majority of professing Christians, founded upon the example of the apostles, ought the other. Many were uncircumcised in heart who were partakers of the external rite of circumcision ; and multitudes are baptised with water who are strangers to the renewing of the Holy Ghost. Must we not, therefore, apply to nominal Christians the apostle's declaration in reference to nominal Jews ? For he is not a Jew, or a Christian, who is one outwardly ; neither is that circumcision, or baptism, which is outward in the flesh ; but he is a Jew, or a Christian, who is one inwardly ; and circumcision, or baptism, is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter ; whose praise is not of men, but of God. As if the apostle had said, he is not a servant of God, or a disciple of Christ, who is one in mere profession ; nor is that circumcision according to its signification and design which is in the flesh. He does not mean to insinuate by this that the observance of the ordinances of religion is unnecessary, or that the profession of religion ought not to be accompanied with its power. His design is to dissuade us from trusting to the form :—to teach us that the most solemn ordinances of the church may be regu-

larly administered, and outwardly observed, without deriving any saving benefit;—to convince us that religion must have an abiding place in the heart before it can be genuine;—and to induce us practically to remember, that God, who looks on the heart, approves or condemns according to the state of the soul.

The advocates of baptismal regeneration further maintain in support of their favourite doctrine, that there is no example in scripture of any exhortation being addressed to professing Christians to be born again, or to be regenerated. The Christians who in the primitive age, it is alleged, fell into error, or relapsed into wickedness, are never in the New Testament taught to seek for regeneration by the Holy Ghost. They are called upon to be renewed,—which, it is contended, indicates a progressive improvement, and not an immediate conversion.

In reply to this statement I remark, that though the epistolary part of the New Testament was addressed chiefly to professing Christians who had given evidence of their conversion to God, and who are therefore styled, beloved of God, called to be saints, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and faithful brethren, they are often reminded that on the supposition of their being only nominal Christians, it was indispensably necessary they should be born again by the Holy Spirit. Of the Galatians of whom the apostle was afraid that he had bestowed labour in vain, and of whom he stood in doubt, he says, that he travelled in birth again, till Christ was formed in them. To the Ephesians he says, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light;” an address which was only applicable to those of them who were believers only in profession, and who were not quickened from a state of death in trespasses and sins. He makes known to the Corinthians the nature of regeneration in order to lead them to self-examination. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold all things are become new. Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove yourselves; know ye not yourselves, how that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates.” If such monitory language was addressed to the members of the

primitive church, who had around them every thing to deter them from avowing Christianity, and who had no earthly inducement to counterbalance the frown of the world,—if it were supposable that they, under the guise of profession, were unregenerate and self-deceived,—how much stronger ground have we for the supposition in regard to nominal Christians in these later times ; when the Christian religion has become national, when the people are baptised in infancy, are trained up in connection with the church, and have many reasons to influence them to continue in its communion !

But the question is decided by the manner in which the prophets, our Lord, and his apostles, treated the Jewish people, who constituted, under the former dispensation, the visible church of God. They addressed them as persons, who, notwithstanding their profession of the faith of Abraham, and their observance of Divinely instituted ordinances, were unregenerate and alienated from God. “Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem ; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it.—Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all them which are circumcised with the uncircumcised : Egypt and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, and that dwell in the wilderness : for all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.—Make you a new heart and a new spirit : for why will ye die, O house of Israel?—For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God : wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near : let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts : and let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”

In like manner, John the Baptist, our Lord, and his apostles, in addressing the Jews, who were circumstanced in respect to profession and external privileges as nominal Christians now are, spoke to them as persons who

required as much as the Gentiles to repent and to be converted. Both were evidently supposed to stand equally in need of being born again; and both are alike warned to flee from the wrath to come by believing on the Son of God. Hence the terms in which our Lord addressed a teacher and ruler of the Jews, and a regular observer of all the ordinances of the Old Testament church; "Marvel not that I said unto thee, ye must be born again." Did he not also explicitly affirm in regard to many of his auditors, that they were in their native depravity, and unregenerate? "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you. And ye will not come to me that ye might have life.—No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." We are to speak in similar terms to the careless, impenitent, and unconverted persons who are nominally Christian; and in faithfulness to them, are to remind them of the necessity of the new birth, of repentance toward God, and of faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. In preaching the gospel, we are ever to keep in view the essential difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate, believers and unbelievers, those who are united to Christ, and those who are without part or lot in his salvation: and as there are multitudes who occupy an intermediate state between the truly pious and the irreligious, and whose real character cannot be certainly distinguished by human observation, how necessary is it that the ministry of the word should be conducted in a discriminating, awakening, and practical manner; so that every hearer may be led to inquire with self-examination and prayer, Am I created anew in Christ Jesus? Have I experienced that great and real change without which no man can enter into the kingdom of God?

II. Regeneration does not consist in mere impressions and convictions. That conviction of sin in adults precedes and accompanies conversion is most certain, as has been already shown. For, how can a man be brought to love God, to delight in his character, and to approve of his law, without self-abhorrence and condemnation? But the cases of Cain and Judas, and many others, prove that violent remorse of conscience, and

fearful apprehensions of the consequences of sin, may be felt, while the heart remains unchanged in regard to God and to holiness. It is almost needless to say, that when the fear of wrath is the governing principle of the mind, love, which is the effect of regeneration, and the spring of all holy and acceptable obedience, is wanting ; and that, therefore, the nature is still unregenerate, however deep and poignant may be the impressions produced on the conscience. It is no uncommon thing, and indeed it is in itself most natural, for persons who have no sense of religion, and who make no pretensions to a religious character, to be alarmed at the sensible tokens of the Divine power and presence, to tremble in the view of death, to implore relief, and to promise amendment ;—who, when the danger is removed, and they are restored to health, return to their sins, and to their forgetfulness of God. Does not this case resemble that of ancient Israel, of whom the Psalmist says, “ When he slew them, then they sought him ; and they remembered that God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer ; nevertheless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues ; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant.”

It is the more necessary to advert to this view of the subject, that there are many, doubtless, of those who are unregenerate, and who finally fall short of eternal life, who have serious impressions about the worth of their souls, and who resolvé to secure their immortal interests. But they allow themselves to be deceived and lulled into fatal security by their impressions and resolutions. Repentance and conversion are put off for the present, because they have seriously purposed to practise them at a period which is future. Like Saul, they honestly confess that they have sinned and have erred exceedingly, but, like the king of Israel, they content themselves with present confession ; and quiet their consciences by promises of future amendment.

III. Regeneration does not consist in a reformation of life merely. It is evident that this change is inward and complete ;—that its seat is the heart,—and that it

extends to all the faculties of the soul. A person, therefore, may, from being sensual become temperate, from being dishonest become upright, and from indulging in violent passions become mild and placid, and yet be unregenerate. He may have escaped the pollutions that are in the world through lust, even by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; while, at the same time, he remains under the dominion of sin. The folly and dissipation of youth are supplanted by the sordid, selfish, and covetous dispositions of riper years; or the sins which were freely indulged while affluence continued, are relinquished because the means of gratification are removed: or, the sins of the past are forsaken because others more suited to the altered age and circumstances of the individual are embraced. Who does not see that a change, partial and without principle, such as this is, is not regeneration?

But even though the change of conduct proceeded from better feelings—from religious convictions produced by the word and providence of God—if it only reached to the life and behaviour, it is not the real change of heart and principle denoted by a new creation. The power of conscience may force a man to break off from sins, and practise duties, while he neither hates sin nor loves holiness. Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him, and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly. Ahab, distinguished among the kings of Israel by his pre-eminent wickedness, so far humbled himself and altered his conduct, as to procure a suspension of the temporal judgment which had been threatened. Many who read and hear the word of God, have occasionally such convictions of the reality of religion as produce great external reformation and diligence in the discharge of particular duties; but with this external reformation and this diligence they are satisfied and deceived, and they remain alienated in heart from God and from godliness.

Reformation of life is, indeed, an indispensable duty binding upon all men, and regeneration will infallibly produce it; but the latter may exist in the absence of

the former, and the life may be reformed when the soul is unrenewed. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature, new dispositions have been given to him, and ability to exercise his powers for the great ends for which they have been bestowed. But where this right frame of mind is entirely wanting, where there is no pure principle of action, there may be, and there often are, motives sufficiently powerful to induce persons to abstain from vice and to discharge certain duties. An ordinary degree of sagacity will enable them readily to discover that excess of any kind is injurious to health;—that a wrathful and implacable disposition is fraught with misery to its owner; and that the virtues of industry, integrity, and sobriety, secure immediate reward. By the operation of inferior motives, such as a sense of honour, a regard to social order, and the love of reputation, some exterior virtues may be cherished that are highly useful to society. But as they proceed from principles whose origin is earthly, and which have no immediate relation to the will or law of God, they possess nothing of the nature and sanctity of true holiness, and are compatible with a state of heart alienated from God. Who requires to be told, that as there is no religious principles exercised in acting from such motives, whatever may be the amiability and excellency of conduct resulting from them, it can afford no indication of a renewed mind? Is the man who is meek and forbearing, reasonable and self-denied, in his deportment in the world, merely because experience has taught him that this is the most likely way to secure his present peace and quiet, actuated by religion in the exercise of those virtues? Is he who has attained to respectability of character, while his governing principle is the love of reputation; and who discharges the duties which he owes to God merely because they secure for him the esteem of men, the subject of that great change of heart which produces supreme love to God, and concern for his glory? Or, has he experienced this change, the reformation of whose conduct is altogether occasioned by the fear of wrath, who loves sin, but who abstains from it in its grosser forms on account of its consequences, and who

endeavours to add to his righteousness, that he may have a purchase price with which to procure his exemption from future punishment? He fears God, indeed, but does his fear of Him awaken the desire of being reconciled to him through Jesus Christ, and of having this Holy Lord God for his friend and portion?

IV. Regeneration does not consist in enthusiastic feelings. The powerful influence of this change on the heart and affections I shall afterwards point out. It is certain that religion when really felt in its Divine power, deeply interests and engages the mind, and moves the desires and affections. But it is necessary to guard against the error of those who look to visions, ecstasies, and extraordinary revelations, as the source of direction and comfort on this subject, in place of following as their guide the written word of God. This delusion leads those who give way to it to undervalue the scriptures and the ordinances of religion, to feel indifferent in regard to the external and appointed means of spiritual knowledge and improvement, and to consider the inward light as sufficient to furnish them with the rule of duty, and to conduct them to eternal life. This is the fanaticism which, with a reproachful spirit, the ignorant and ungodly impute to pure and undefiled religion: and it is carefully to be shunned as dangerous in itself, and calculated to bring dishonour on the doctrine of Christ.

It is, indeed, evident, that there may be very high religious affections, or affections highly excited by circumstances connected with religion, when there is no saving change experienced. It was of those Galatians of whom the apostle says, that he was afraid of them, lest he had bestowed upon them labour in vain, that he asks, "Where is the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear you record, that if it had been possible, you would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me." There are hearers who receive the word with joy, but who, notwithstanding, remain unsanctified by it; and whose emotions and impressions are like the morning cloud and the early dew, which pass away. The approach of our Lord to Jerusalem awakened the affections of the multitude, who cut down branches of palm

trees, and strewed them in the way; who spread their garments before him, and cried, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, hosanna in the highest!" and yet how soon did these feelings of admiration subside, and give place to those of an opposite description!

The Holy Spirit does not act upon the souls of men as if they were machines; forcing them to that which is at variance with their understanding and choice; or moving their affections without enlightening their minds; but he deals with them as moral agents, whom he illuminates in the knowledge of God, inclines to his love and obedience, and whose whole work in regenerating and sanctifying human nature, is rationally to be accounted for by the rule and the principles of the written word. The means by which he operates, and the effects which he produces, are there clearly stated; and the nature, the concomitants, and the evidences of regeneration, are to be ascertained by the scriptures, and by them alone. That infallible directory, in place of giving support to visions and enthusiastic inspirations, teaches us to regard such extravagancies as altogether of human origin, and as foreign to the work of the Holy Spirit. "To the law and the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.—For God hath not given us the Spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

CHAPTER V.

REGENERATION: ITS NATURE.

THE nature of regeneration is to be learned from the holy scriptures, in which it is represented as a new birth, a new creation, the communication of a vital principle, and the writing of the law of God on the heart. It is the creation of fallen man after that Divine image which sin has effaced, and which consists in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. It is the production by Almighty power of such a frame of heart and of mind as will incline man, naturally alienated from God, to love him supremely, to serve him cordially, and to delight in him as his chief good and portion. I therefore remark,

I. That it is a real and universal change. There is no addition made to the natural powers and faculties that are proper to man, and by which he is characterised. These are the same, though impaired in his fallen condition, which he possessed in his state of innocency: and his helplessness consists, not in the entire want of any one of them, but in his being willingly estranged from God and biassed against holiness, and in perverting them, under the influence of this bias, from the great purposes for which they were designed. The real and universal change effected in regeneration is rendered necessary by the want of original righteousness, and the corruption of the whole nature: and as this depravity adheres to all the children of Adam, a complete renovation by the Holy Ghost is of course common and peculiar to each of the children of God. This is the impress of God set upon them, the image of the Second Adam, by which they resemble one another, and are marked out from the rest of mankind. This is the property, the

character, which they bear in common, whatever diversity may exist as to their circumstances ; “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.”

This change is universal, as the metaphors by which it is set forth in scripture most clearly teach. It extends to the whole man, to all the powers and principles of the soul. If, in the first creation of man, he was formed entire in all the parts and powers of his nature, the change of which he is the subject when created anew must also extend to his whole character. If sin has infected every faculty, must not the regenerating power of God operate on every faculty ? If the malady be inherent and universal, the cure, in order to be effectual, must be co-extensive ; reaching to the whole heart and soul. If all the powers are naturally disordered, and perverted from their true ends, efficacious grace renews the whole man after the image of God, and inclines him voluntarily to co-operate in advancing the glory of God. In consequence of this great and all-pervading change, the understanding and will, the spirit and body, the talents and opportunities, are harmoniously consecrated to the honour and service of the Great Lord and Ruler of all. “ Old things are passed away, and all things become new.”

II. Regeneration is a new disposition of heart and soul, contrary to the former frame. The Holy Spirit communicates a temper and disposition of mind opposite to that which is natural to man. That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. It is spiritual in its properties and tendencies, and is altogether different from that which man naturally desires or loves. It is by the communication of this, which in scripture is called a new heart, that God works in both to will and to do of his good pleasure : for as all the volitions and acts of moral agents must be their own, the only way in which it can be said that God produces them in his people is, by giving them that frame of mind from which they proceed.

As a man is in his heart so is his character as a moral agent to be estimated, and so is he regarded by Him who weigheth the spirits. If that be evil, all that pro-

ceeds from it, considered in a moral point of view, will also be evil; and if that be good, the volitions and actions which flow from it will partake of the same character. Those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man." In regeneration, the heart of enmity against God, which is not subject to his law, is taken away, and a new heart and a right spirit put within us; in consequence of which we make choice of God as our chief good, are inclined to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments and do them. This Divine operation, and the great and universal change connected with it, are figuratively, but significantly, expressed by putting off the old man, and putting on the new, which after God is created in knowledge and true holiness.

Spiritual taste and discernment are essentially included in this new frame or disposition of mind, communicated by the Holy Spirit. Perhaps, we should speak still more accurately did we say, that this gracious operation of the Spirit of God immediately produces the love of Divine things, and that this love is the disposition of soul in which regeneration mainly consists. The indifference, and even aversion to them, natural to man, is removed; and a discernment of their beauty and worth, as well as a relish for their excellencies is possessed. The objects themselves are unchanged,—the perfections, goodness, and kindness of God,—the glorious character, offices, and all-sufficiency of the Redeemer,—the condescension, agency, and work of the Holy Spirit,—the nearness and reality of eternity,—and the necessity and infinite value of that salvation by which alone sinful beings can enter into it with safety; these, though formerly regarded with unconcern and disrelish, are now seen in a new light, are felt to be all important, and they awaken feelings corresponding to their nature and magnitude. But if there had not been a new frame of soul communicated, if love to God and to his image had not been produced, the excellencies of his character would

not have been discerned, nor himself and the blessedness which he gives desired ; there would have remained a film on the eyes, and a callousness on the heart, which would have excluded the knowledge and the love of God.

The change effected by the communication of this new frame of soul may be illustrated by the diversity which obtains among mankind in regard to some of the natural principles of the human mind. One person has a genius or turn for one profession or department of knowledge, and another for a different. In some an ear for music seems to be almost wanting ; in others, there is an absence of taste for the beautiful and sublime in nature ; the most lovely landscape, and the most stupendous objects are viewed with comparative indifference. But if that taste, which at present does not exist, were communicated, the same external things which are now seen without interest, would be contemplated with exquisite delight : the harmony of sounds which is listened to without pleasure would yield thrilling enjoyment. All that is wanting to the possession of this enjoyment is the principle, or state of mind, by which we are capable of receiving it. Introduce the powers of taste and creative imagination into the mind of a person who has been hitherto totally void of them, and will he not perceive beauties in objects which were formerly in regard to him, as if they had no existence, and will he not have sources of pleasure which were before unknown ? The description of nature's loveliness or magnificence ; or the recital of a tale of woe, suggests to him a picture which he readily fills up, and fully forms ; while the same description and recital scarcely make any impression on persons of a different mental constitution. Hence the diversity and even contrariety of ideas that are suggested to the minds of different individuals in a company by the enunciation of the same words, and the communication of the same intelligence : the trains of thought excited are probably as different as are the different individuals present. All are conscious that at different times, and in different circumstances, the same sounds, and even the same words, affect them very differently. The tunes with which we were familiar in early life, which are associated

with our most tender recollections, and the names of places which are fixed in the memory of the heart, have sometimes a powerful influence in awakening trains of thought, and especially when heard at a distance from home, or in a foreign land.

In like manner, let the indifference and natural dislike of man to the things of the Spirit of God be removed by the introduction of a new frame of heart and soul, and spiritual objects will affect us very differently, because their glories will be instantly perceived, and a relish for their enjoyment felt. As the loveliness of the creation is seen when the veil of night is removed by the light of the rising sun, so their incomparable beauty is seen and appreciated; they are valued more than gold, yea, than fine gold, and felt to be sweeter than honey and the honey-comb. The words which formerly awakened no emotion now prove to be spirit and life; and in consequence of the altered state of the mind, they and the affections and desires which they excite, are fondly cherished. We feel as if we were put in possession of powers of a nature totally different from what we had before, by which we are, as it were, introduced into a new world, and have a relish for a class of beauties and enjoyments which do not fall within the range of natural existence.

III. The new disposition or frame of soul communicated in regeneration is the spring of spiritual life and activity. The severation of man from God, in regard to all holy affection and desire, is represented in scripture as death. The expression is applicable and forcible; for as the body is inert and motionless when the spirit departs from it, so is the soul with respect to the great purposes of human existence, while devoid, as it naturally is, of the principle of spiritual vitality, the disposition to delight in God, and to love him, and serve him. As the body, though all its parts are entire, neither moves nor is capable of moving when the principle of life is extinct, so the soul, though retaining all the faculties that are proper to it, understanding, will, and affections, is naturally destitute of spiritual life, and is not, therefore, capable of spiritual exercises and enjoyments.

The mind in its natural state is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. It is dead in trespasses and sins, possessing no principle of spiritual vitality.

But in regeneration spiritual life is communicated. Hence, the regenerate are said to be quickened; to hear the voice of the Son of God, and live; to be quickened together with Christ; to have passed from death unto life; to be made alive by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus; and to be living by faith on the Son of God. That eternal life is thus begun which is to be consummated in the presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and in the possession of a pure and immortal inheritance. The communication of a new frame or disposition of heart and soul, is the vital active principle by which the renewed nature moves naturally and voluntarily towards God. It lives spiritually; and, therefore, spiritual exercises and enjoyments are connatural to it. Its aspirations are expressed by the words of the Psalmist:—"As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God? Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee." * Thus is the soul that is made alive spiritually active: it delights in God; loves him; trusts in, and is happy in being voluntarily instrumental in promoting his glory. Its former apathy, insensibility, and impotency, have given place to lively sensibility and holy desire; and the operations of the living principle are felt and exhibited. In place of being spiritually inert as man is in an unregenerate state, he is now fully awake to the worth and glory of Divine things, and he is active and decided in his choice of them. Sin is hated and relinquished; the Redeemer is cordially received and followed; and all things are counted but loss for the excellency of his knowledge: his yoke is assumed, and it is felt to be easy; the cross is taken up, and love makes it light; and alive as he is to the realities of religion, to the infinite worth of the Saviour, and to the

* Psalm xlii. 1, 2, and lxxiii. 25, 26.

obligations under which his gracious interposition has placed him, he cheerfully consecrates himself to his service, and takes pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, because endured for Christ's sake.

But as these are enjoyments connected with the natural life of man, so do enjoyments flow from the movements and exercise of the spiritual principles and affections. The joys and consolation which the new-born soul experiences in religion, are the life which is communicated by the Holy Spirit; they are in kind the same as those exalted pleasures which are to form the happiness of heaven. As this life increases in vigour and strength, so does the measure of enjoyment which is felt in the exercise of the faculties in the service of God; and, therefore, when this life reaches maturity, and there remains no opposing principle of hostility in the soul, the true being, the perfect felicity, designed for our immortal nature, are complete.

The spiritual life communicated in regeneration is begun and maintained by union to Christ. This union is formed by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the regenerate; in consequence of which they flee to Christ, embrace him by faith, and rest upon him alone for salvation. United to him in whom all fulness dwells, and receiving life-giving influences out of his fulness, they live in the most comprehensive sense of the expression: they live to God, and for immortality: Christ himself liveth in them, and maintains, notwithstanding opposition, the principle of vitality in existence and in operation, till every impediment be surmounted, and till it flourish amid all the enjoyments and glories of eternity. "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life."—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I; but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved us, and who gave himself for us."—John iv. 14; Gal. ii. 20.

This life, which is at first communicated from Christ by the Spirit in regeneration, is maintained by the actual aid and operation of the Spirit of God. For though the

regenerate have a right frame of heart towards God, and have a disposition to the performance of his will, and though saving grace abides habitually in them, they require the influence of the Spirit to preserve this principle of spiritual life, and to enable them to exercise it in holy acts of duty to God. As He who at first breathed into man the breath of life, so that he became a living soul, continues by his power to maintain the natural life which was thus communicated ; and as man cannot exert his animal energies or his mental faculties independently of him in whom he lives, moves, and has his being ; neither can the new creature perpetuate its existence, or put forth its strength in acts of love and duty to God, without the continued reception of life from Christ by the Spirit. It is not more necessary that the God of nature, who made all things, should, as the God of providence, uphold and preserve all things in being, and give efficiency to the physical laws which he has established, than it is that, as the God of grace, he should support the new creation in the souls of the regenerate by the continual and actual operation of his Spirit. Hence the declaration of our Lord to his apostles :—"Without me, ye can do nothing. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches : he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit ; for without me ye can do nothing." * A tree and its branches are nourished by the same juice ; it proceeds from the stem as its source to the boughs by communication ; and it is this common nutriment which constitutes their union. As the branch, when separated from the body of the tree, and from the continual nourishment which it supplied, decays and withers, so would the principle of spiritual life implanted in the soul of the believer decline and perish, if separated from Christ, the source of life.

Nor is it merely for the preservation of this life, but for its growth and exercise in duty, that the influence of the Holy Spirit is continually and absolutely necessary.

* John, xv. 2—6.

“We are not sufficient of ourselves,” said the apostle, “to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.” He denied that there was any such power in him as would enable him to exercise any grace, or to discharge any duty, acceptably to God, without immediate aid from above; and to that aid he looked for strength and sufficiency for all the services to which he might be called. Hence, believers are said to live in the Spirit; to walk after the Spirit; to worship God in the Spirit; to purify their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit; to be led by the Spirit: and God works in them both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Hence, also, the continual breathings of the new creature after God—as if it could not exist but in the conscious enjoyment of his presence; it pants after him like the eager desire of the hart after the water-brooks; the tenor of its thoughts, affections, and designs, are unto God; on whom, as its chief good, it delights to dwell; and from whom, through the Saviour, and by the Spirit, comes all its life, strength, and blessedness.

IV. The disposition of heart and soul communicated in regeneration is the commencement of holiness in man. Hence, God describes this work when he says, “I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.” It is the renewal on the heart of that law which was written on the heart of Adam, but which sin had effaced; the creation of man anew after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness. As the consequence of this Divine operation, there is in the mind a knowledge of the law of God; an approbation of it as holy, just, and good; a delighting in it after the inner man; a conformity of heart to it; a strong predominant disposition to yield obedience to it; love and affection towards it as the transcript of the character of God; and ability, in a happy measure, to observe its precepts.

No one can question that the communication of this new form of heart and soul is the commencement of holiness in man. The language of scripture in regard to regeneration clearly implies this. To be born again, presupposes the total depravation of human nature. If man be spiritually dead—alienated from the life of God—dis-

affected and disloyal to the supreme Lord and Ruler—and if his heart be deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, how can there remain in him any dormant principles of holiness? If, notwithstanding his intellectual strength, his literary attainments, his knowledge and wisdom, he is spiritually blind, and knows not the things of the Spirit of God, and is incapable of discerning them, can his principles and conduct partake of true holiness, or be pleasing to God? If no man can see the kingdom of God, or enter into it, till this darkness be removed—till this depravation of nature is rectified—till God shines into his heart, and gives him the knowledge of his glory, it is demonstrably evident that regeneration is the beginning and the foundation of true piety and purity in human nature.

When this change takes place, an alterative and diffusive principle of holiness is implanted in the heart, which extends its influence to every power and principle of the nature. There is such a real likeness to God as man is capable of receiving; the whole image of God is imprinted; the engraving, as it were, of all goodness, righteousness, and truth. Regenerated persons are, therefore, said to be partakers of the Divine nature. Christ himself is formed in them; because their mind, affections, principles, and desires, are similar to his; and because they as really bear his image as they retained the likeness, and exhibited the properties, of the first Adam. It is by the Spirit of the Lord that we are changed into this image, from glory to glory; impressed with that holiness which gives to the creature its chief resemblance to the Creator. Born of God, they bear the image of their heavenly Father; and, as obedient children, they love the holiness which he loves, and follow after it in the way which he enjoins.

The holiness of the new nature shows its power and prevalency by spirituality of thought and affection. The natural mind is habitually carnal; and the principles and the life are regulated accordingly. The rational, immortal spirit of man, in place of holding the governing power, and directing all for God and for his glory, is itself under the servitude of sin and the world, and is

seeking its enjoyment away from the fountain of infinite good. But by regeneration it is emancipated from this thralldom, raised to the sovereign dominion, made heavenly in its thoughts, desires, and ends, and is supremely concerned to enjoy the favour and presence of God. It now tends to God as its end, to heaven as its home, breathes for meetness for its felicity and glory, and continually aspires to that ultimate perfection, that pure, incorruptible, and unfading inheritance, to which God in his abundant mercy has begotten it. The heaven-born soul is thus distinguished, not by the most perfect human, or even angelic eloquence,—not by the capacity of speaking in foreign tongues,—not by the power of working miracles,—not by zeal for mere opinions;—but by a Godlike frame or disposition, by which it bears a likeness to God, and is allied to him as his child.

As this change is the commencement of holiness in man, so is it the basis of its increase and continuance. The Holy Spirit who communicates a new heart, a principle of spiritual life, in regeneration, preserves it, and carries it on unto perfection. “Whosoever is born of God,” says the apostle John, “doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The person regenerated is distinguished from others, not only by being delivered from the power of sin, but by the new nature, habit, or principle implanted in him; wrought in him by the creating act of almighty power, and which has an abiding subsistence in the soul. This is the germ or seed from which are to spring all the fruits of righteousness,—the living principle which is to flourish in the midst of opposition, and which no enemy will be suffered to destroy;—the beginning of an advancing career of purity and blessedness which is never to terminate. Perseverance and increase in holiness are secured by the promises of God, the power of Christ, and the inhabitation of the Holy Ghost, by whom the good work is begun, and by whose agency it is carried on till perfected in glory.

V. The new creation produced in regeneration is a permanent production. Its completeness and perfection as the work of God imply this. All the parts of the new

man are produced at once, though not in all their maturity and strength ; as a child when born has all the members of the full grown man. There is in the new creation the germ of every gracious principle, the seeds of all the fruits of godliness and righteousness—the penitence, faith, love, zeal, purity, and patience, which the gospel requires. The influence of this work on the soul is so complete and powerful, that its faculties—its understanding, will, affections, desires, and enjoyments, may be said to be new. “ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away, and all things become new.” The total absence of godliness, therefore, whatever attention may be given to the relative and social duties of life, proves that the nature is unregenerate, just as much as the habitual neglect of the obligations of honesty, truth, and integrity, however high may be the pretence to piety, shows that the great change has not yet been experienced. For this, in regard to its universality, is perfect ; and hence, believers are said to have “ put off the old man with his deeds ; and to have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him.”

The work of God in regeneration is abiding and permanent. It is not an emotion connected with religion, produced by mere natural means,—an impression which is soon effaced and forgotten. It is a fixed and settled principle in the soul, opposed to its natural depravity, and which is the occasion of that conflict between the flesh and the spirit which is to continue till the spiritual enemy is utterly eradicated. In token of its destined permanency, not till the end of time only, but through the ages of eternity, it has the ascendancy from the moment in which it is produced ; and though the regenerate person has still remaining corruption, and may give too many indications of its power and prevalency, sin shall not have the mastery and dominion over him. The new nature within him is designed by the Omnipotent agent who wrought it there, not for a temporary, but an eternal existence ;—to abide amid all the vicissitudes of this mortal life ;—to expand gradually into a degree of maturity befitting the regions of sinless enjoyment ;—and

even there to advance with the rapid flight of immortals into higher glories, and to increase with all the increase of God. The mercy and power that produced it, and, in the production of it, made alive and created anew a sinful being, intended, by this supernatural act—this Divine communication, that this being should live for ever; and, therefore, the watchful eye of God is evermore upon it, and by his mighty power he keeps it night and day. It is the new creation of incomparable beauty and excellency, in comparison of which the former creation shall not be remembered or come into mind; and while *this* is to pass away and finally perish, *that* is to subsist through eternity, and to unfold with brightest lustre the glories of the great Original and Fashioner of all things.

VI. The new nature communicated in regeneration produces a new and peculiar relation to God—a relation of likeness, and a relation of privilege. The image of the Father is impressed upon the child, and a right is conveyed to the immunities and enjoyments of the children. Hence it is said, “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.” The apostle Peter blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath *begotten us* again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

To the relation of likeness to God, their heavenly Father, in all who are born again, I have already noticed; and it is only further necessary to observe on this head, that there are filial affections and dispositions communicated to them. They feel the deepest reverence for God, and give to him the honour which he claims as a father. They entertain affectionate, humble confidence towards him, and trust all their concerns in his hands, both in regard to this world and to eternity. Loving his character, they esteem the smiles of his countenance as their happiness; they value sacred communion and intercourse with him; they are affected like children with regard for his interests; they willingly submit to his government, and obey his commandments. In these, and in other

respects, they have the same mind which was in Christ ; and, like him, they reckon it as their daily food to do his holy and righteous will. They are drawn to him by filial love, and consecrate themselves willingly to his service and glory.

But the new and endearing relation of children thus created, gives rise to corresponding privileges. If men, in consequence of their birth, are entitled to distinctions and honours, what are the hopes to which they are heirs who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God ? They who are by a second creation made to bear his image, and who are by this creation fitted for glory and happiness, are the special objects of his boundless love, are under his peculiar guardianship, and are designed to inherit immortal blessedness. They are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ Jesus. United to Christ—to him who is Lord of all—who inherits all—whose sovereign dominion governs all, and who possesses all—whom have they to fear, or what can they want ? Under his guidance, they are conducted to glory, and will be put in possession of the kingdom prepared for them, and which it is the Father's good pleasure to give them. It is not more certain that the image of God is impressed on them in regeneration, than it is that, by the act of adoption, they are invested with glorious immunities and privileges, and that they are hereafter in union with the first born among many brethren, to enjoy the highest dignity, and eternal felicity. Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.

VII. The change produced by the operation of the Holy Spirit in regeneration is instantaneous. By this we do not mean to say, that it is not usually preceded by circumstances which the Spirit of God over-rules for its accomplishment. Nor do we mean to insinuate that means are not Divinely appointed for the production of this change, and that these means ought not to be used by all men. But if this be altogether a supernatural

work, effected only by the power of the Holy Ghost, in consequence of which he who was before an enemy becomes a friend, and that which was formerly offensive and disliked becomes pleasing and beloved—its accomplishment must be a momentary act. The terms by which in scripture it is denoted indicate this. A new birth, a new creation, the communication of a new heart, turning to God, a translation from darkness unto light—describe events instantaneously completed. There may be, and there usually is, a process of conviction long existing in the mind before this change; and when it takes place, it is followed by a gradually progressing work of spiritual improvement and holiness; but neither of these is regeneration. This gracious operation of the Spirit of God is effected on the soul the moment it is quickened from death in sin—that a new disposition is communicated—and that holiness begins. Accordingly, three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost by the Apostle Peter. Saul, on the way to Damascus, was changed from being a bitter enemy to Christ and to his cause, to be a humble penitent, and a devoted friend and follower. The Jailer of Philippi was suddenly transformed from a pagan idolater to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

But if this great change be instantaneous, how is it that the regenerate are so seldom able to refer with certainty to the time of their conversion? A change so entire as this, affecting the views, feelings, hopes and fears, joys and sorrows, of the person who is the subject of it, would, we might suppose, be immediately observed. It would probably be so but for the three following reasons:—First, this change takes place, we have reason to believe, in innumerable cases in infancy and childhood. The work of grace is begun before the faculties are unfolded, or the power of observation exists. Secondly, when this Divine operation is wrought in persons of mature years, ignorance and corruption are not perfectly eradicated; on the contrary, they in some measure remain during life; and give rise to perplexity, sorrow, and deep humiliation. The feelings, the devotions, and the services of the regenerate, are mingled with sin; and

though they delight in the law of God in the inner man, they have to contend with the body of death, and to mourn over it. Hence the difficulty which they often experience in coming to a satisfactory conclusion regarding the evidence of their conversion, and the genuineness of their faith. Thirdly, there are counterfeit graces, or appearances of religion, in the unregenerate.

We are directed by scripture to judge of the reality of these by the effects produced. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." They who are in Christ are described as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;—as spiritually minded, and minding the things of the Spirit;—as setting their affections on things above;—as dying unto sin, and living unto God;—as denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly in the world. They who are regenerate are concerned for deliverance from sin, and from all its consequences; are striving against it in all the forms in which it presents itself; are conscientiously endeavouring to glorify God by their bodies and spirits which are his; and are careful in observing all the means of grace, and to walk in all God's ordinances and commandments. By these, and similar fruits and evidences of regenerating grace, are men required to examine and prove themselves, to see whether they be in the faith. Lest they should be deceived in a matter of such great importance, they are to implore the aid and direction of the Spirit of God to discharge this duty faithfully and impartially: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Nor are they who have good reason to refer their conversion to a particular time, and to certain known means, to disregard the fruits of faith and holiness as crowning evidences of the reality of their being born to God, and made new creatures in Christ. If, like the Apostle Paul, they can allude to the day, the place, and the means, of their spiritual birth; they will of course do so, like that

eminent servant of Christ, with humility, with gratitude to God for his redeeming mercy, and with a deep sense of obligation to show forth the praises of Him by whom they have been called out of darkness into marvellous light. They will speak of this great change not in the spirit of boasting, but of self-abasement and unfeigned thankfulness to that God who has had mercy on them. "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord," Ps. xl. 1—5.

CHAPTER VI.

REGENERATION: ITS IMMEDIATE INFLUENCE ON THE
 UNDERSTANDING, WILL, AFFECTIONS,
 AND DESIRES.

REGENERATION is a great and universal change ; the introduction by Almighty power of a new disposition of heart and soul ; the principle of spiritual life and activity ; the commencement of true holiness in man ; a new creation after the image of God in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. The communication of this living holy principle to the soul of man must produce a mighty change on his views and feelings. We shall now direct our attention to its immediate influence on the understanding, will, affections, and desires. So great, indeed, its operation on these powers of our nature, that regeneration is spoken of in scripture as a giving of sight to the blind, ears to the deaf, a mind to comprehend, and a heart to feel. Let us consider,

I. Its influence on the understanding. Regeneration mainly consists, as was remarked, in a frame and disposition of heart and soul, contrary to the former,—a new supernatural sense, a certain spiritual taste, that relishes the sweetness, and perceives the loveliness, of Divine things, in a manner altogether different from the natural mind of man. The communication of this new disposition by the Spirit of God is accompanied with the spiritual illumination of the understanding ; so that the darkness or blindness which is conjoined with alienation of heart from God is removed, and as the immediate consequence, the mind has different and opposite views of the great objects and realities of the gospel from what it previously entertained. As at the commencement of the first creation the light was called into existence, so

when God forms the second he shines into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. On this ground regeneration is often spoken of as a supernatural communication of spiritual light; as an opening of the eyes of sinful men, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. "This is life eternal," said our Lord, "that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." * The apostle prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to be given to the Ephesians, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they might know the hope of their calling, and what the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, Eph. i. 15.

Hence, the new views which are entertained of God. Whatever opinions man naturally entertains of God, they are only speculative opinions, which have no spiritual influence on the heart, and which allow an entire alienation from God. But now the perfections, character, and moral government of God are seen in a new light: there is a discovery of the real nature of God, as a Spirit infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. Every aspect in which his nature and procedure are contemplated, produces deep impression; his greatness, and glorious majesty, his infinite purity, his patience, condescension, and unwearied goodness, are beheld as realities, and awaken corresponding emotions. They may have been known formerly as subjects of speculation; they are now seen and felt, as of the deepest personal interest. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes," Job xlii. 5, 6.

While the regenerate entertain different views of the perfections and character of God in general, they have new apprehensions in particular of his infinite holiness and excellency. In the boundless purity of God, they see and admire the loveliness of the Divine character; and while they are humbled and abased before this holy

* John, xvii. 3.

Lord God, they are not driven away from his presence, but are drawn to him by a sense of his infinite amiableness and excellence. The discovery of his glory, while it gives them just conceptions of the nature and desert of sin, fills their renewed hearts with delight in him, and love to him. Formerly, God was not in all their thoughts ; or, if at any time his name and attributes occurred to their memory, the subject was unwelcome, and therefore soon dismissed ; but now they can think with pleasure of Him whose eye is upon them every moment, from whose spirit they cannot go, and from whose presence they desire not to flee.

They are particularly affected with the discovery of the boundless mercy and love of God. In place of regarding his clemency as a connivance at sin, and an indulgence to the sinner, they view it as the compassion of the God of spotless holiness, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; as mercy exercised in full consistency with the most perfect hatred to sin, and the claims of righteousness and truth. The love that provided a Saviour for rebels and enemies,—that gave him up to death for their redemption,—that has exalted him for the purpose of giving them repentance, and forgiveness of sins,—and which has continued to hold out to them, amid all their neglect and ungodliness, the invitations and offers of mercy,—this love, while it inspires them with the hope of acceptance, fills them with shame and confusion at the thought of having so long and so greatly offended this most gracious God.

They have also new views concerning themselves, their character, and condition. They have just apprehensions of the ends of their being,—of their having lived in the neglect of these ends—of their having forsaken God, the “fountain of living water, and hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” They are abased under a sense of their numerous and aggravated sins—under the condemnation of the law of God ;—under the view of his wrath, which they have provoked, and to which they are exposed ;—under the conviction of the sinfulness of their nature, and the evil and desert of sin. They formerly, perhaps, had sometimes very serious

fears of the punishment of sin, and were disposed to do something to procure exemption from that dreaded punishment: but they now feel that they have wronged God, while they have injured themselves; that they have wickedly refused voluntarily to glorify the God that made them, a Being of transcendent excellency, and infinite loveliness and amiableness; and that they have, therefore, violated and lived in the violation of the most sacred obligations. They now, not only see more clearly than before the danger of sinning against God, but the guilt of dishonouring him, the baseness and injustice of disobeying his authority, the inherent pollution and odiousness of sin. The reverence and love which they feel for the character of God, fill them with self-abhorrence; and in proportion to the clearness of their views of his glory, is the depth of their humiliation. "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips; and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the king, the Lord of Hosts." * I am without excuse, I confess the justice of the sentence, the equity, the perfect righteousness of the Divine procedure, though I were left to perish; but there is forgiveness with God, he delighteth in mercy; and therefore I cannot abandon myself to despair, I will not utterly relinquish the hope of his favour: I will go to my Father, and will yield myself unconditionally, helpless and guilty as I am, to his sovereignty. With the persevering importunity of the woman of Canaan, who, as often as she was repulsed, renewed and urged her plea, I will continue to supplicate mercy to pardon, and grace to help me.

Hence the new views which the regenerate have of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him. How different are the apprehensions and feelings with which he is now regarded from those which were once entertained! It is common, indeed, for persons in a Christian land, who have enjoyed a religious education and example, to speak of the name and character of the Saviour with reverence; and it seems impossible for any

* Isaiah, vi. 4.

but blasphemers to mention this great Benefactor of mankind with any other feeling, or in any other language. Herod revered John as a just man and a holy ; and when he heard him he did many things, and heard him gladly ; and yet his veneration for the Baptist suffered him to take away his life. Such is the kind of veneration which unregenerate persons entertain of Christ,—veneration which may show itself in external homage, in the observance of his institutions ;—but which does not arise from a spiritual discovery of his infinite glory, loveliness, and amiableness ;—from a sense of the injustice of refusing to him the supreme love of the heart ; and from a deep conviction of entire and absolute need of his gracious interposition, of his great salvation.

•But the views of the regenerate person of the Redeemer are new and affecting. Convinced of sin, deeply humbled and self-abased, and brought to an unconditional surrender to the Divine sovereignty, with what unwonted and inexpressible delight does he listen to the soul-reviving words, “Behold the Lamb of God ! that taketh away the sin of the world. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.” •A glory before unknown in the person and character of Christ begins to open on his mind :—a glory so bright as to make all terrestrial things dwindle into comparative insignificance. The former spiritual indifference which no argument, no eloquence, no denunciation, could remove, has now given place to the deepest interest, to the most lively concern to win Christ, and to be found in him : •and with a sense of his infinite excellency and suitableness, and of the claims which he has won to the gratitude and love of all the children of fallen humanity, he flees to him as his hope and refuge, and regards him as all his salvation, and all his desire. He is amazed at his grace and condescension in inviting one to come to him who has sinned so long, and sinned against so many mercies, who has sinned against the light of the word, the admonitions of providence, the checks of conscience ; and who has added to all his sin the guilt of having resisted and neglected the Saviour. But he cannot utterly despair

of being accepted while he reads the promises—"Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out:—Wherefore, also, he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him:—And the Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." *

He is especially encouraged when he looks to what Christ has done to save sinners. The work of redeeming love, which he has completed, is all that law and justice require for the exercise of Divine mercy;—is all that is necessary for the manifestation of the attributes of God in bright and glorious lustre;—forms a ground for the full and free remission of sin;—furnishes a righteousness by which the penitent is justified before his Maker; and a sure and stable foundation for him to rest his hopes of acceptance upon. To the view of the regenerated soul, the whole of this wondrous plan and work of redemption—the ransom which has been paid for the deliverance of sinful men—the victim who was substituted in their room—and the grace and compassion which have been shown—appear in a light altogether new, affecting, and glorious. Every thing in this great scheme of redeeming mercy, he sees to be worthy of the Holy Lawgiver of the universe;—while it is a salvation by grace, it is a salvation from sin;—while it is free to the chief of sinners, it shows the spotless holiness of God, and maintains the authority of the law;—and he therefore gladly receives Jesus Christ as made of God unto him wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption. In receiving him he utterly renounces every plea of personal merit, every claim that comes in competition with his, and gives to him the whole glory of his salvation. I glory in the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. "I count all things but loss for the excellency of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I might win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which

* John vi. 37; Heb. vii. 27; Rev. xxii. 17.

is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith," Philip. iii. 8, 9.

Hence the new views which are entertained by the regenerate soul of the ordinances of religion. In place of feeling them to be irksome, he is glad when it is said unto him, go ye up to the house of the Lord. He anticipates with pleasure the time when he hopes to unite with those who "rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Even the earthly sanctuary is dear to him as affording him the means of sacred intercourse and communion with the God of salvation, and of seeing his power and his glory. One thing he has desired of the Lord, and that he seeks after; that he may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of his life, and behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple, Ps. xxvii. 4.

How different too are his views of eternal realities from what he had been accustomed to entertain! While the existence of these is admitted, how slight is the impression which they produce on the natural mind, and how little influence have they on the regulation of the heart and life! There is, indeed, no greater subject of astonishment than the thoughtlessness and unconcern with which man, with the full knowledge of the shortness and uncertainty of this mortal existence, treats eternity. But when renewed in the spirit of his mind, with what solemn feeling does he contemplate a never-ending existence, and how trivial and unimportant does this world appear in comparison of that which is beyond the grave! Eternity, in place of casting a gloom over his mind, is now associated with the full fruition of God, with unmingled and immortal happiness, with sinless society and enjoyments, with an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. He now wishes to live for immortality, to regard himself as a

citizen of heaven, to subordinate all his studies and pursuits to the real ends of his being, and to cultivate that holiness without which he cannot see the Lord. He views himself, and his fellow-creatures as related to God, rendered capable of voluntarily co-operating with him in promoting his glory, and as designed for eternity.

II. Regeneration has an immediate and powerful influence on the will. It is to the change which is produced on this leading faculty of the mind that the Psalmist refers when he says, that the Lord shall send the rod of his strength out of Zion, and that the people shall be made willing in the day of his power, Ps. cx. 3.

It is the heart and will that give the character to man. He is religious or irreligious, virtuous or the contrary, according as his heart is right with God, and as his will is inclined to act agreeably to the Divine will. While this determining power of the mind resists the authority of God, and the cordial entertainment of the truth as it is in Jesus, however much we may convince the understanding of the reasonableness of Christianity, and the obligation of complying with its demands, the man bears the character of a rebel against heaven. But by the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit, this disinclination is removed; and by a supernatural but efficacious and alluring influence, he produces in the soul, willingness, freedom, and delight, in turning unto God, and in bowing to the sceptre of Christ. Hence the astonishing change which was experienced on the day of Pentecost by three thousand persons who had till then been animated by the inveterate prejudices and enmity of the Jews against the gospel. Paul, till the hour of his conversion was infuriated with bitter zeal against the name and the cause of Christ; and his heart and will were in active hostility to the authority of God; but in a moment he, who was a persecutor and blasphemer, voluntarily presents himself a living sacrifice to God, and prays to be directed how he may glorify him. His will is so completely changed that he becomes a new man; has the teachable disposition of a little child, and is strongly inclined to what had formerly been the objects of his aversion.

The extent of the change which regeneration produces on the will is shown in the actings of the soul in regard to God, to Christ, and to holy obedience. There is an immediate choice made of God as sovereign ruler, as the chief good, and as the true and everlasting portion. While the Divine and operating influence is efficacious and victorious, the heart and will turn to God, adhere to him, not through compulsion, but most freely and voluntarily. "Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words. I intreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments." * How astonishing the change, when the self-love and self-will natural to man, and which are the main source of his ungodliness and misery, are so completely subdued, that he willingly and cheerfully surrenders himself to the government of God, grieves that he loves him so little, asks of him to reign supremely in him and over him, and hopes that this God may be his God for ever and ever, and be his guide even unto death!

He cleaves also to Christ; he not only perceives his glory, but loves his character. Renouncing his own wisdom, and abhorring his former obduracy and insensibility, he receives Christ in all his character and offices, gratefully clings to him as his deliverer, delights in him and in his excellencies, wherever they are displayed, and is resolved to follow him even unto death. The heart that hindered his compliance with the call of the gospel is taken away, and a new heart is given to him, which disposes him to union with Christ, which has a longing desire after his salvation, which can find no peace but in his precious blood, and no resting-place away from his finished work.

He also, in the strength of Divine grace, makes resolutions of new obedience. He may, indeed, have made some resolutions before to forsake sin, and keep the commandments of God; but these resolutions were

* Psalm cxix. 57—60.

formed, not in humility, but in the pride of self-sufficiency; not in the strength of the Lord God, but in his own. They were, therefore, inefficacious and short-lived, like the morning cloud and the early dew, they vanished away. But now he loves the holiness, and reveres the authority, of the Supreme Lawgiver; and, therefore, he is anxious that no iniquity should have dominion over him, that he may be enabled to subdue the sin which most easily besets him, and that he may yield obedience to all the commandments. From the experience he has had of his own weakness and corruption, and from the credit which he gives to the Divine declaration regarding the deceitfulness of the heart, he is taught to distrust himself, his convictions of duty, and his firm purposes of new obedience. He has so often and so long deceived himself with promises of amendment, that he dares not confide in his own strength or stability; but, with deep humility, looks up for support to the all-sufficiency and the grace of God. Though conscious that he loves the holiness which God approves, that he hungers and thirsts after righteousness, it is with self-distrust and deep humility he resolves to keep all the commandments, and entirely depends for ability to do so on Divine strength and aid: "Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps may not slip. Be surety for thy servant for good. Make thy grace sufficient for me, and perfect thy strength in my weakness."

III. Regeneration has an immediate and powerful influence on the affections and desires. This has appeared from the observations which have already been made; for it was impossible, when considering the illumination of the understanding, and the renovation of the will, not to have noticed the new operations of the feelings of the heart. If regeneration consist in communicating to the soul a supernatural sense which, in the understanding, discerns the excellency of spiritual things, and in the heart has a relish for them; if this new disposition of heart and soul be the foundation of the right exercise of the mental faculties and feelings, and be the spring of that spiritual taste which is gratified by the beauty and the loveliness of the Divine glory, and of the

varied affections and emotions which now begin to be experienced, then, it is certain, that the spiritual perceptions and spiritual feelings are blended together ; and that when we consider the one, we are necessarily led to advert to the other. The light which God communicates when he shines into the heart, is invariably accompanied with life and power, by which it is distinguished from the mere acquisition of doctrinal knowledge, or the more comprehensive understanding of Divine revelation.

The affections, it is true, may be highly excited in connexion with religion, when there has been no saving change experienced. The heart may be greatly moved with the truth, reality, and moral grandeur of religion, when the heart remains unrenewed. There may be a seeming love to Christ, very fervent, and even productive of self-denial in some things ; love which arises from false ideas and representations of him,—from regard to him as a Saviour from wrath, and not from approbation of his character as a Saviour from sin. While they flatter themselves that they have in him a hiding-place from future punishment, will not unregenerate persons feel warmly attached to their supposed Deliverer ? There may be desire to enjoy the blessedness of religion, when, like Balaam, there is no concern felt to be made free from sin, and rescued from the bondage of iniquity. There may be joy in the gospel, as in the case of the hearers compared to stony ground, when the word has not made any saving impression, and when the nature of the salvation which it offers is really unknown. There is sometimes, in what may be termed false personal religion, so great a resemblance to the true, as to render it extremely difficult to distinguish by specific marks the one from the other.

It is nevertheless certain, that regeneration has a mighty influence in changing and in refining the affections. Regenerate persons are represented as tasting that the Lord is gracious ; as having an unction from the Holy One ; as knowing his name, and putting their trust in him ; as being constrained by love to the obedience which he requires ; as rejoicing in him, glorying in

him, and panting with longing desire for his presence. The liveliness of these and other religious affections will, of course, be somewhat influenced by constitutional temperament, and by other circumstances. But persons have good reason to question the reality of their conversion whose hearts are cold only in religion, and in regard to a religion, too, which arrays the majesty of the Divinity with the softness, tenderness, and purity of sinless humanity, which presents the Son of God in the form of a servant, weeping, suffering, and dying for the sins of men. Who can think aright of the Saviour, of his claims to universal gratitude and love, without feeling those emotions which the view of infinite excellence, of unbounded and self-denied benevolence is calculated to awaken? To be full of sensibility to the pleasures of sense, and to be cold and indifferent to the discoveries, the hopes, and consolations of religion, are circumstances which form evidence sufficiently strong, that its regenerating power has never been felt.

The new affections which regeneration produces are excited and called into exercise by spiritual light—by a sense of the beauty and glory of Divine things,—and by conviction of their certain reality.

They are excited and called into exercise by spiritual knowledge. The new heart is suitably affected by the new apprehensions which the mind has of God, of Christ, and of eternal realities. “They shall be all taught of God; every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”* The great truths which are contained in the written word, they are taught effectually and experimentally by the Holy Spirit; and, in consequence of the opening of the Scriptures to their understandings, new affections are awakened in their hearts. So closely are spiritual discernment and spiritual improvement and enjoyment connected, that in the very act of beholding the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image; our love is awakened, because there are objects in our view which are infinitely lovely; our joy abounds, because we see that its elements

* John. vi. 45.

are inexhaustible and eternal ; and our hope is enlivened, since we are assured of the immovable stability on which it rests.

These objects are not only seen,—but they are seen as inconceivably lovely and excellent. It is this perception of the beauty and glory of Divine things which chiefly distinguishes the affections of the renewed mind from all false appearances and counterfeit graces. For the greatness, mighty power, and awful majesty of God, do produce an impression on the hearts of men ; in the same way as any other objects of grandeur and of terror will naturally affect the human mind : and many under the compulsory influence of such impression, begin the services of repentance and amendment, to them most burdensome and joyless. It will be this same view of God in his infinite greatness, omniscient, eternal, and unchangeable, that will lead many hereafter to “say to the mountain and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.”* It is only a discovery of the beauty of God’s perfections,—such a discernment of his excellency and glory as is attended with delight—that excites and calls into exercise love to God, and all the affections which are experienced by the man who is a new creature in Christ Jesus.

These affections are also produced by a conviction of the certain reality of spiritual things. In an unregenerate state a belief of these things is vague and inefficacious : their reality, if at all admitted, is viewed without any particular interest : but the accompaniment of true conversion is a conviction of the infinite importance and absolute certainty of the truth of the gospel ;—a conviction deep and abiding of the greatness, the grace, and the glory of the Redeemer ;—and a conviction which, while it leads to corresponding exertions, moves the affections, and fixes them on heavenly objects. Hence arise contrition, tenderness of conscience, humble hope in the Divine mercy, and concern to win Christ, and be found in him. Hence, also, that deep humility which is

* Rev. vi. 16.

the invariable and the prominent effect of regeneration,—which is essential to the acquisition of Christian holiness,—and which will continue to characterise the inhabitants of those regions where this holiness is perfect.

• The great change which regeneration produces on the affections, is shewn by the new attachments and aversions, joys and sorrows, fears and hopes, experienced by the regenerate person.

He has new attachments. He loves God with supreme and devoted affection; as possessed of all excellency and perfection; as his Creator, preserver, and benefactor; and as the God of his salvation. His love to the Redeemer is so lively and powerful, that it secures an entire surrender to his glory; it impels to a performance of all the duties which he has enjoined; and it constrains him to live not to himself, but to him that died for him and rose again. He loves and cherishes the influence of that Divine Spirit, who is to him the source of light, life, and holiness, and by whom he is sealed unto the day of redemption. He loves all who bear the image of his Lord: he does good unto all men; and especially to those who are of the household of faith. He loves the purity of that law which is written on his heart; and though imperfection adhere to himself and to all his services, he is prevailingly and perseveringly holy in heart and in life.

He has also new aversions. His heart, which was formerly enmity against God, is now filled with hatred against sin. The ways which he loved before, he now dislikes. Though he pities the careless and ungodly, he hates the wrong which they do to God, and he will not sit with the wicked.

He has new joys also. These are always pure and spiritual, and on some occasions exceeding great. They arise from discoveries of God's glory; the light of God's countenance; and reconciliation to him through Jesus Christ. He is blessed in knowing, in all its consoling and saving import, the joyful sound; for it has taught him to joy in God through Jesus Christ, by whom he has received the atonement. Whom, having not seen, he loves; and in whom, though now he sees him not, yet

believing, he rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Pet. i. 10. Even in this valley of tears, joy flows to him from the favour of God—from his experience of God's gracious manifestations to his soul—from the compassion, power, and faithfulness of Christ—from the fullness of grace and strength treasured up in him for the supply of his wants—from the ordinances of the sanctuary—from the exercises of private devotion—and from the ample and irrevocable provisions and promises of that covenant which is ordered in all things, and sure. The peace of God which passeth all understanding keeps his heart and mind through Christ Jesus.

The new sorrows and fears which he experiences arise from his own imperfections, and from his altered views of sin and holiness. The severest of his distresses proceeds from the absence of the light of the Divine countenance, and the want of sensible enjoyment. Under them all, he encourages himself in the Lord, and betakes himself to his unchanging compassion and all-sufficiency. Though the waves and billows of affliction pass over him, it is his privilege still to hope in God, who is the health of his countenance and his God, Psalm xlii.

He has new hopes. In regard to these, he differs from what he formerly was, and from the world around him. Busy in the pursuit of some object of momentary duration, men walk in a vain show; spend their money for that which is not bread, and their labour for that which satisfieth not. Disappointment does not teach them the folly of expecting happiness from those fleeting phantoms which they so eagerly follow; they continue the pursuit, and weary themselves in vain; yet their posterity approve their sayings. But the regenerate person is taught by God to raise his views and hopes to higher objects; to look beyond this perishable earth, which is doomed to destruction, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and which fadeth not away; and to expect, in heaven, the full perfection and unmingled happiness of which his nature is capable. The living hope to which he is called partakes of the sureness of the foundation on which it rests; gives him by anticipation the immortal good which God has promised him; forms the anchor of his soul, both

sure and stedfast under all the billows of affliction; cheers and animates him to perseverance in the Christian course; and urges him forward to the home and the resting-place which God has provided for him in heaven. His citizenship is in another country; he is travelling towards that land of promise; and the desires which are awakened in his heart by the Spirit of God, prompt him to direct himself in good earnest towards that better world, where all the regenerated and adopted children of God meet in the enjoyment of full and eternal blessedness.

CHAPTER VII.

NEW PRINCIPLES BROUGHT INTO IMMEDIATE OPERATION.

THE change which regeneration produces on the faculties and affections of the mind, in directing them to new objects, and in giving rise to new views and operations, furnishes means to those who are its subjects by which they may ascertain its reality. There are also new principles implanted in the heart by the Spirit of God, from the exercise of which it may be known whether that great change has been experienced with which they are immediately and inseparably connected. These principles are in their operation co-existent with the Divine and gracious work in which they originate; and, consequently, wherever it can be proved that any one of them is in activity, there is proof that conversion to God has taken place.

The principles to which I refer are faith, repentance, and love. I shall not here consider their nature any further than my present purpose requires me to do so. It is my design to show that every person who is regenerated is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ, a true penitent, and a lover of God and holiness.

I. He is a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. He exercises that faith which is the gift of God, and with which salvation is inseparably connected. Hence, the apostle John expressly affirms, that "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." * The converse of the proposition is also true, "Whosoever is born of God, believeth that Jesus is the Christ." That faith which does not spring from a right disposition of heart towards God is not genuine; and no one is entitled

* 1 John, v. 1.

to the name of a believer who is unregenerate. It is to them who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, that power is given to become the sons of God, even to all that believe on his name.*

It is for this reason that in scripture many of the privileges and blessings which are associated with regeneration are represented as inseparably connected with faith in our Lord. If they only who are born again are made meet for the kingdom of God; so they who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ shall not come into condemnation, but have passed from death unto life. If they only who, according to God's abundant mercy, are begotten again to the lively hope of the heavenly inheritance, have a title to eternal glory; is it not declared that "he that believeth in the Son of God hath everlasting life?" † If no man can say that Jesus is the Christ but by the Holy Ghost; ‡ that is, if no man will ever believe to the saving of the soul but through the operation of the Divine Spirit; is it not also certain that the new birth is the effect of the influence of the same Almighty Agent? If it be asserted that, whosoever is born of God overcometh the world, is it not also said, that "this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith?" § The connexion between the work of grace in the soul, and the exercise of faith in Christ, is immediate and indissoluble; so that it is absolutely certain that he who believes in the Saviour is regenerate, and he who is regenerate believes. The grounds of this connexion are:—

1. That the great object of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. While the renovation of man after the image of God is an act of infinite kindness to him, the design of God is to unite him to the Redeemer; and thus to bring him to feel and own his obligation for salvation and eternal life to the only Mediator. Accordingly, in regeneration, Christ is the model after which the new creation is formed; and all who are the subjects of this Divine influence have impressed upon them the image of the Son

* John, i. 14.

‡ 1 Cor. xii. 3.

† John, iii. 36.

§ 1 John, v. 4.

of God. He is the First-born among many brethren, and in all things he has the pre-eminence. Every one, therefore, who is born again, honour and exalts the Saviour; receives him willingly in all the characters which he sustains, and in all the freeness and fulness of his redemption; and renouncing every other ground of hope, he cleaves to Christ as his only stay and refuge. The light which is communicated is pre-eminently the knowledge of Christ; the faith which is implanted is the faith of Christ; the love which is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost is the love of Christ; and the peace and joy which flow to the soul in believing are experienced through Jesus Christ.

2. Both faith in Christ and regeneration are alike necessary to an admission into the kingdom of God. It is not less absolutely certain that no man who is not born again can enter into the kingdom of God, than it is that no man who does not believe can enjoy eternal life. If, therefore, we have the most ample evidence for concluding that every regenerate person will ultimately be made perfect in holiness, and attain immortal happiness, we are sure that every regenerate person will believe in Christ, who is the way to the Father, and through whom alone any of our sinful race can come unto God.

3. The exercises of mind involved in believing on Christ are exercises which can only be experienced by a new-born soul. They afford infallible evidence, therefore, that the heart is right with God, and that the good work has been begun, which gives rise to all holy and spiritual desires.

How great is the difference between the faith of the mere nominal Christian and that of the true believer—between the faith of the same person when unregenerate and regenerate! Like many others, he once had a negative belief in the truth of Divine revelation, and in the mission of Christ; that is, he had no principle of belief opposed to this in his mind. He considered his faith to be genuine, just because he had always taken the Divine authority of the Bible for granted, without any inquiry on the subject; or, because he did not go the length of absolutely denying its claims to inspiration. But now he

has a deep impression of the reality of the truths of the gospel, regards them as essential to his comfort and hope, and receives them with his whole heart, as the words of the living God. He formerly, perhaps, knew nothing of the import of these truths—was ignorant of the great designs for which Christ came into the world, and had no concern to become better acquainted with his character, offices, and work. But now he knows why he believes, and in whom he believes; that he was qualified by his Divine excellencies for the discharge of his office; that in infinite kindness and condescension he descended from his heavenly glory, and tabernacled among men; that though all things were made by him, and for him, he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death—even the death of the cross. He knows the grace, compassion, and power, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and gives to him the love and confidence of his heart. He is no longer in doubt and in uncertainty regarding the glory of the Redeemer; but believes, and is sure, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God. When asked, in the language originally addressed to the disciples:—Will ye also go away? Will ye also forsake him whom ye acknowledge as your Lord and Master?—he still more strongly expresses absolute dependence upon him; his firm adherence to him; his venturing his all upon him; and his devoted obedience to him.

Before regeneration, his belief was inefficacious and dead; it was a mere speculative opinion, which had no influence on the heart—which moved not its affections and desires to the pursuit of spiritual good. But now his faith is a living principle, which unites him to the Divine and glorified Redeemer—which, out of his fulness, brings spiritual health and power to his soul, and which diffuses a mighty and vital influence through the whole man.

The exercise of this living faith implies a frame of mind different from that which is natural to man; for it obviously includes suitable views of ourselves, as persons who are under obligations to glorify God, but who have violated these obligations, rebelled against his authority, fallen under condemnation, and are exposed to wrath;

who are depraved as well as guilty—away from God and from holiness ; and who are indebted for our recovery to the rich and efficacious grace of God. It pre-supposes also that we have just apprehensions of Christ ; of his Divine dignity as the image of the invisible God ; of his compassion and power as the Saviour of perishing man ; of his admirable suitableness to our lost and ruined condition as sinners ; and of his infinite fulness, the source of all vital and holy influence. It also implies that the actings of our souls towards Christ correspond with these views of him and of ourselves ; that we are receiving him, trusting in him, resigning ourselves to him, and subjecting ourselves to his authority as Lord of all. Hence this faith is the spring of all the Christian graces, and is associated with the exercise of new and spiritual affections. It neither can nor does exist alone. It is invariably accompanied with the love, joy, peace, long suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, temperance.

II. Regeneration is always productive of true repentance. The same Divine Spirit who creates anew in Christ Jesus, is he by whom sinners are taught to “ look to Him whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and to be in bitterness, as one who is in bitterness for a first-born,” Zech. xii. 10.

There is, indeed, before conversion, a process of deep conviction of sin usually experienced. The sinner is aroused and alarmed by apprehensions of the power and justice of God, and of his liability to future and threatened punishment. He is moved with fear by the terrors of the Lord ; and he begins to renounce sin, and to do something to render himself worthy of the Divine favour. He learns, by successive and fruitless efforts, his weakness and corruption, his utter inability to save himself, or to contribute by his righteousness to the formation of the ground of his acceptance before his Maker. But it is not till he obtains a new heart and right spirit, that he truly loves God, hates sin, and loathes himself on account of it ; that he feels and deplores the wrong he has done to God ; that he fully approves of the law as holy, just, and good, and acquiesces in its denunciations ; that he really considers himself to be unworthy of the

least of all the mercies which God has bestowed on him ; and that he gratefully receives the Redeemer, and delights in him as a Saviour from sin, as well as from wrath. The penitence which he cherishes is genuine ; for it is produced by right apprehensions of the nature of sin, hatred of it, sorrow on account of it, and it is accompanied and followed by the practice of holiness.

The person who is regenerate is a genuine penitent, because he has right apprehensions of the nature of sin. His views of it are different from those of all other persons. The wicked regard it as an unimportant thing, about which it would be folly to feel any concern. Those who have regard to moral character as that is estimated among men, strongly reprobate the practice of any vice disallowed by society ; but disregard to God, and habitual neglect of all the duties of piety and devotion, which are due to him, they scarcely consider as offences at all ; or, if they do, they are viewed by them as trivial. Even the man who is convinced of sin, but whose convictions arise from selfish considerations, and are of a natural character, has no hatred to sin, any farther than he dreads the terrible consequences to which it leads. But the true penitent views sin as an infinite evil in itself,—infinite, because committed against a God of boundless greatness, goodness, and excellency,—who has, unquestionably, the first claim to the love and obedience of all his intelligent creatures ; disobedience to whom is a renunciation of his authority, and a disparagement of his character, attributes, and commands. It appears also to be an evil of immense magnitude, as it divests the immortal beings who practise it, of the image of their Maker, deprives them of the happiness for which their nature was designed, and produces vast and interminable misery. While the penitent views sin as this evil thing, in respect of God, and of his fellow-creatures, he feels its inherent evil in the effects which it has produced on himself. It has debased and polluted his nature, so as to render him altogether unclean ; it had separated him from the favour and friendship of a holy God ; and but for the infinite wisdom and goodness of God which had

made provision for the expiation of sin, and the restoration of the sinner, he would have perished for ever.

Hence, the hatred which he entertains against sin. Viewing it, as he does, as an injury done to God, whom he now reveres and loves, as his Ruler and Benefactor, how is it possible for him not to abhor the sin, by which he is dishonoured and wronged? When he reflects, that his sin has contributed to the misery that is in the world,—that it was this evil and abominable thing which occasioned the abasement, sufferings, and death of the Redeemer; he deeply feels the odiousness of sin, he abhors himself as a sinner, and repents in dust and ashes. When he views the degraded condition into which sin has reduced human nature—has divested it of its original purity and moral soundness—has rendered it deceitful, contentious, cruel, and oppressive—has made it instrumental in perverting the bounties of the Creator into means of ungodliness and rebellion—and has unfitted it, unless created anew, for any other lot, than a complete and eternal separation from the happiness of God's gracious presence; he hates this great and tremendous evil with his whole heart and soul. When he considers the influence of sin in regard to himself, the disorder which it has introduced into his faculties and affections, the ascendancy which it acquired over him, the weakness and corruption which it has entailed, and the utter ruin and misery in which, but for the gracious interposition of God, it would have terminated; he hates sin with a perfect hatred, in all the forms in which it presents itself to his view.

Hence the sorrow for sin, which is experienced by the true penitent. His soul is penetrated with the deepest regret, that he should be so ungrateful to his bountiful Benefactor,—that he should be so little affected with the discovery of his infinite glory and loveliness, his mercy and love,—that his relittings of heart should not be more penitential,—and that he should not have still greater sensibility in mourning over his guilt and apostacy. With the dutifulness of a child, he laments the wrong which he has done to his kind and heavenly Father; he

grieves that that which he hates and loathes should still have so much influence over him : and he longs for the period when his freedom shall be complete, and when he shall be delivered from the body of this death.

Repentance is thus accompanied and followed by the love and the practice of holiness. The penitent ceases to do evil, and learns to do well. He renounces all sin, and is fixed in his determination to practise universal holiness. He begins, and he perseveres in prosecuting, the work of self-denial, and of obedience to all God's commandments. He has entered on the course of progressive holiness, and he goes on from strength to strength, till he is made meet to be united to the glorified inhabitants of heaven, when his penitential sorrows shall have ended.

Thus, the principles of faith and repentance are immediately brought into exercise in the heart of every regenerate person. It is not more certain that he is born again, than that he turns to God through Jesus Christ. He voluntarily seeks the Lord, cannot bear any longer to live away from him, and, under the power of Divine grace giving repentance, he firmly resolves to go to God, to cast himself at his feet, and cry for mercy. He also relies on the Redeemer as the only foundation of his acceptance, and makes him the sole ground of his hope and confidence. He rejoices in Christ Jesus, and has no confidence in the flesh.

III. The next great principle which is implanted in the soul in regeneration, is love—love to God, to holiness, and to man. The character of man by nature, according to the representation of scripture, is the opposite of this. He is an enemy to God in his mind, and by wicked works. He pursues self-gratification, regardless of the honour of God, and in proud resistance to his will. His heart is enmity against God, is not subject to his law, neither indeed can be : and even when he is brought by alarm of conscience to think of religion, his anxiety is to be exempted from the consequences of sin, and be allowed to indulge all the desires of his unholy and unregenerate mind. The greatness of the change produced by the Spirit of God is shown by the introduction of the

new principle of love — a principle which originally united man to God, and which is designed to be the bond of union in a state of grace, and in the higher condition of glory. It is characterised by the following circumstances :

First. Love to God is produced by knowledge of his character. It is not a mere feeling in the heart, awakened by no adequate cause, and sustained by no proper foundation. He who is its object, is seen to be infinitely excellent, to be possessed of every property that can command the esteem, and secure the affection, of intelligent creatures ; to be the Author of life, and the source of being and blessedness to all. The criminality of man consists in not loving this great and gracious Lord God, who claims, and who is entitled to be loved ; and it is not till the veil is taken off the mind,—till the new heart is communicated, that God is beheld as altogether lovely. A glory is seen in his whole character, in every perfection of his nature ; and he is regarded as the fountain whence streams of grace, kindness, and mercy continually flow. The penitent is justly amazed at his former blindness, his false conceptions of his Maker, his estrangement from him, and his insensibility to all his excellencies. He now sees the glory of God, and in seeing it he loves him. “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in his heart, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” *

Secondly. Love to God is accompanied with, or rather consists in, delight in him. The boundless perfection of the Divine nature and character is that which God himself views with complacency and delight. This constitutes the riches, the moral excellencies, in which God rejoices, and which he unfolds to the universe as entitling him to the supreme and continued affection of every creature. To the request of his servant, “Shew me thy glory,” he replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee. And the Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with

* Cor. iv. 2—7.

him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord :—The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty.”* There is here an assemblage of all possible excellencies, and each infinite in its extent—one sun of moral glory, which no man can approach unto, and which no man hath seen, in all its bright effulgence, nor can see. This is the boundless perfection and loveliness which the new-born soul loves from the commencement of its spiritual existence. It draws forth its affections and desires, and becomes the centre as well as the source of its being and blessedness. It is the object which every pure mind contemplates with complacency and joy. It awakens and sustains that affection of delight and admiration which the law declares should fill the heart and soul, and in the exercise of which God is loved as a Being infinitely pure and lovely.

It is in the cross of Christ that the character of God is seen so as to draw forth the affections of the new heart, accompanied with complacency and delight in the glorious object contemplated. It is in the cross that the perfections of God are manifested with the greatest fulness and clearness; so that all the indications of them in the creation and in providence are feeble and comparatively obscure. Though these indications of Divine power, wisdom, and goodness, were clearer than they really are, could it be supposed that they would win the affections of rebels to their sovereign, and influence them to rejoice in his character and reign? To sinful and depraved beings, who are conscious that they have wronged the God that made them, will it give delight to see the mighty power and greatness of God in the firmament of the heavens, and in the earth around them? If, in all the glories of nature, there be no voice to proclaim the mercy of God to fallen men, and to point out to them the method of forgiveness and restoration, will not the display of the omnipotence and greatness of God produce the very opposite of delight—will it not fill them with apprehension

* Exod. xxxiii. 18—23 ; xxxiv. 5, 6.

and alarm ? But in the cross of Christ we behold God manifest in the flesh ; redeeming sinners from misery by the substitution of himself ; discovering, in perfect harmony and in fullest glory, the justice, wisdom, love, and mercy of God ; and announcing by impressive action, that God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and not imputing their trespasses unto them. When this wonderful discovery is beheld aright, love to God springs up in the heart ; delight and joy are experienced in regard to this kind and gracious God ; and this delight and complacency are expressed by veneration for the means of redemption and reconciliation. “ God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ,” Gal. vi. 14.

Thirdly. Love to God partly consists in gratitude to God. That he ought to be loved, and that he is loved, by every person who is created anew in Christ Jesus, on account of his own essential and absolute excellency, cannot be questioned. But we are so constituted as to feel deeply interested in our own happiness ; and, consequently, we are peculiarly sensitive in regard to benevolence exercised with respect to ourselves or our immediate connexions. The feeling is natural, and, within proper limits, it is right and commendable.

The want of gratitude even to a fellow creature is a strong indication of worthlessness and depravity. In regard to God—the source of every blessing, the author of all that we are, have, or can hope for—it is depravity of the greatest baseness and odiousness. But it is with baseness of this monstrous description that God himself charges our sinful race :—“ I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib ; but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.” * But in conversion, gratitude to God is awakened in the heart ; thankfulness not merely for the bounties of providence, but for the great blessings of redeeming love. The believer gives praise to God for his unspeakable gift, Christ Jesus ; for the love which he manifested in not

* Isaiah, i. 2.

sparing his own Son, but in delivering him up to death ; for the grace, kindness, and condescension of the Redeemer in veiling his glory, making himself poor, and in giving himself up a sacrifice to God. Gratitude to God and to the Redeemer is a ruling, powerful, and pervading principle in his heart—influencing him to express his sense of obligation in all the ways in which his devotedness and attachment can be shown. “The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge, that, if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.” *

This affection is particularly strong immediately after conversion, and under a lively sense of deliverance from great and imminent ruin. Under its influence, the apostle Paul instantly exclaimed, “ Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do ? ” † By what services may I be allowed to express my obligation to my Divine Deliverer ? How may I show my deep sense of his rich grace, his matchless condescension, his Divine loveliness and glory ? He rescued me from going down to the pit, by giving his own life a ransom for me ; he changed my heart, and he opened my eyes, by the grace of his Spirit ; and shall I not show forth his praise by my body and spirit—by my life, my talents, and my all ? This is the grateful feeling of every genuine convert—a feeling which is sacredly cherished and promoted as he advances in the Christian course ; and which leads him, when that course has terminated, to regard all the services he has rendered as poor expressions of the gratitude which was due from him to his Divine Lord.

Love to man is invariably and necessarily conjoined with love to God. In loving God, the mind is affected with delight in his moral excellency, joy in his happiness, and gratitude for his mercies ; in loving our fellow creatures, there is, at least, pleasure felt in their happiness, and the desire of promoting it. This affection is so essentially the same, that it is impossible for the same individual to exercise it towards God and not exercise it towards his

* 2 Cor. v. 14.

† Acts, ix. 6.

fellow creatures ; or truly and disinterestedly to love his fellow creatures and not love God. No mind that is not really virtuous can at all exercise it ; and if it be truly exercised towards God, the greatest and the most glorious Being, it will unquestionably be exercised towards created intelligent beings.

Mankind are divisible into two classes ; they are either righteous or wicked ; the subjects of regenerating and sanctifying grace, or estranged from God, and not obedient to his law.

CHAPTER VIII.

REGENERATION: ITS NECESSITY.

THE necessity of the change produced by regeneration arises from the fallen and depraved condition of man. As restoration to health pre-supposes the previous existence and removal of disease, so the new creation of our nature after the image of God implies that, before this change, it is polluted and depraved. This depravity extends to all mankind: in Adam all died: that which is born of the flesh is flesh, of the same degenerate nature as that from which it has sprung. They are described by the apostle as "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." * I understand this description as intimating that mankind are naturally destitute of the principle of holiness denominated the life of God, from which all acceptable obedience proceeds; that they are dead in regard to God, the supreme and absolute end of their existence, to whom and for whom their being should be consecrated. They show, in all circumstances, and under the greatest advantages, that the abiding disposition of the mind is wholly estranged from the life of God—that they have no relish for its enjoyments—no perception of its excellencies, and no desire for its attainment.

This being the actual condition of mankind, the necessity of regeneration is most manifest. Without this, their spiritual improvement, conformity to the Divine will, and meetness for the glorious designs of an immortal existence, are clearly impossible. Can we expect that the stream will materially differ from the fountain

* Eph. iv. 18, 19.

whence it flows? If there be none righteous—no, not one—what ground have we to hope that, without a great and supernatural change, any will really cease from sin, and live unto righteousness? Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Though mankind have all the natural powers characteristic of rational and accountable beings, they want the heart or disposition to use them spiritually, and according to their original design; and, therefore, however wise and useful their conduct may be in regard to this life, the corrupt principle from which they act, vitiates, when judged of in a moral and religious point of view, their character and performances. God requires a living sacrifice, presented from hearts glowing with love to himself; but how can this be rendered by beings who have not the love of God in them? The services which he asks, and which he will accept, must be given voluntarily; but will a being, whose heart is enmity against him, yield obedience of this description? He may do many things from a dread of punishment, and perform a task felt to be burdensome with servile reluctance; but can this constrained and heartless subjection be viewed with approbation? The obedience of a sinful being should be rendered with penitence and self-abasement, under the impression of personal unworthiness; but will such obedience be given till the heart of stone be taken away, and the mind is renovated by Divine grace? The parable of the pharisee and the publican forcibly shows the immediate effect of regeneration in this respect on the human heart: while the one proudly reckoned upon the duties which he had performed as giving him a claim on the favour of God, the other, standing afar off, would not so much as lift his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, “God be merciful to me, a sinner!” The necessity of regeneration appears—

I. From the numerous and explicit declarations of scripture. These declarations have been made by him who knows what man is, and who has fixed the constitution of that eternal kingdom of peace and joy of which he himself is the Sovereign. Independently of the numerous

passages in which conversion is expressly mentioned as indispensable to the attainment of eternal life, it is implied by the whole spirit and tenor of Divine revelation : and it was taught with greater or less clearness under every dispensation of religion ; a circumstance which shews, irrespectively of other considerations, that regeneration is universally necessary, and that, without it, none of our fallen race can ever enter into the kingdom of God. Is not this implied in the distinction which is made throughout scripture between the righteous and the wicked ? Without this change, who, of a race universally fallen and depraved, could attain unto righteousness ? Is not every unregenerate person impenitent and wicked ? But the wicked is commanded to “forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts ; to return to the Lord, who will have mercy on him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon. . . . There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked. Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him ; but woe to the wicked, it shall be ill with him, for the reward of his hands shall be given him.”* Of all the passages in which this doctrine is taught in the Old Testament, the following, perhaps, is the most impressive and awful ; indicative of the tender compassion and condescension of God ; declaring the misery to which the unconverted are exposed ; and that their final ruin can only be prevented by an immediate and effectual return unto Him from whom they have revolted. “Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked ; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live ; turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways ; for why will ye die, O house of Israel ?” Here, the Lord God is represented as swearing by himself, that the death of the unconverted is not owing to him ; that he has pleasure in their penitential return to him ; but that, unless they return, misery and destruction are inevitable.

Our Lord, in the course of his ministry, delivered numerous declarations of similar import. He solemnly averred, by the most forcible terms, the necessity of

* Isaiah, lv. 7, 8 ; iii. 10, 11.

regeneration. To Nicodemus he said, " Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh, is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again." In the conclusion of the sermon on the mount, he has shown how profitless and unavailing the mere name and profession of religion are ; and that without the experience of its sanctifying power, there can be no admission into the kingdom of God. " Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven : many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you ; depart from me, ye that work iniquity." *

I need not say, how fully this doctrine is taught by the apostles ; and with what frequency and affectionate tenderness they inculcate the necessity of regeneration, in order to the enjoyment of eternal life. They declare, that without the holiness, which is the effect of this great change, no man can see the Lord : that all external observances are vain and profitless without this ; that " neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature," Gal. vi. 15.

II. The necessity of regeneration appears evident from the character of God. Though his kingdom rules over all, and includes the wicked as well as the righteous, he has declared that a period is approaching, when he shall separate the one from the other ; and that he will receive into the heaven of happiness and glory, which he has prepared, those only whose tempers and dispositions have, through Divine grace, been conformed to his will. That he will not admit others into his glorious kingdom, we are assured by the testimony of his word. We are led to the same conclusion by a consideration of the purity and perfection of his nature. No governor

* Matt. vii. 20.

would willingly raise to honour the avowed and inveterate enemies of his government. But, are not unregenerate sinners opposed in their disposition and character to God; and, in consequence of this opposition, incapable either of holding intercourse with him, or of being the objects of his approbation? They resist his authority, dislike and disobey his commands, and neglect the great purposes of their being.

Beings thus depraved, and persisting in their depravity, God must necessarily view with abhorrence and displeasure. He is infinitely holy; of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity. He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, neither shall evil dwell with him. It is most certain that sinful men, while they remain in this condition, cannot be approved of him; that his nature must change, and cease to be what it is, before he can regard the impure with complacency; and that therefore he will continue for ever to abhor what most justly merits his abhorrence. This being the case, it is impossible that God should confer on them the tokens of his favour, the gracious rewards which he appropriates to those that love him. To give them a participation in these, were to declare to the universe that they possess a character which does not belong to them; or, at least, in his estimation, that no distinction should be made in the allotments of the righteous and the wicked; and that, consequently, there is no essential difference between right and wrong, between holiness and sin, between virtue and vice. The supposition is sufficient to show the hopeless condition of the finally impenitent; and the necessity of regeneration by the Holy Spirit, in order to escape everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. If the unregenerate can expect future bliss only on the supposition that the immutable God will change his nature, and reverse the principles on which his moral government is founded, we need not proceed farther to prove that they must either be converted or perish.

Would it not be utterly incongruous with his glorious character, to receive impenitent sinners into his ever-

lasting kingdom? Would not such procedure seem unworthy of Him as the Judge and Governor of the universe? Would it not nullify the declarations of his word, falsify the representations of his infinitely holy character, and confound the different awards of virtue and vice? The language addressed to the church on earth would cease to be applicable to the inhabitants of heaven: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." If one unregenerate soul were admitted into heaven, it would no longer be a just description of its inhabitants, that "they have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

III. The necessity of regeneration appears from the design of the work of Christ. His sufferings and death were intended to reconcile the exercise of redeeming mercy with the claims of righteousness,—to exhibit the justice of God in harmony with the pardon of sin. But this mercy is not a connivance at sin, a purchased indulgence to the sinner in the practice of iniquity: its communication is accompanied with a redemption *from* iniquity, a restoration of man, its object, to holiness and to God. The great end which was contemplated by the atoning death of Christ, was the salvation of a great multitude of the human race; but how could this end be attained, unless they were renovated after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness? What would avail, that by his atonement Christ had satisfied Divine justice, and removed the malediction, and had fully reconciled the exercise of mercy with the claims of righteousness,—if sin were to continue, as before, to hold its dominion over their hearts? In this case, there would not be a single soul benefited by his mediation; he himself would not see the results intended by his sufferings; and, in as far as his death related to the redemption of mankind, he would have died in vain.

Was it not to save his people from their sins, that he

came into the world? Deliverances from the consequences of sin was, indeed, included in the accomplishment of this design; but it mainly referred to redemption from the pollution and power of sin in the heart; and how can this design, in any case, be attained, but by the production of that saving change, by which sinful men voluntarily turn from darkness unto light, and from the dominion of sin and Satan, unto God? Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; to rescue from the sin and the misery which Satan was so instrumental in introducing into the world; but how can this purpose be accomplished, if this adversary be allowed effectually to blind the hearts of men, and to prevent them from exercising repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ? On this supposition, would not his hateful usurpation be as completely maintained, as though the Son of God had not been manifested in the flesh, and had not obeyed and died for the redemption of sinners? He came that he might suffer for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God;—that he might restore us not only to his favour, but to the capacity of holding intercourse and fellowship with him. But how can this end ever be attained, unless the heart of stone and of enmity be taken away, and we are brought to love God, to relish the blessedness experienced in his gracious presence, and to delight in his will? Till then, are we not estranged from God, reluctant to hold communion with him, and unfit for its enjoyment? If, therefore, it be necessary that fruit should result from the Redeemer's mediatorial work, and that he should see of the travail of his soul, it is indispensable that the nature of man should be regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

The design of the work of Christ was to bring sinful men to practice holiness, and to the enjoyment of great and invaluable privileges. But in no instance will they do the one, or be capable of enjoying the other, till they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit. It was sin that originally occasioned a separation between God and man; and until this be removed, and the heart changed in its

affections and desires, no advantages can be of avail in regard to final happiness and salvation.

IV. The necessity of regeneration appears from the ministration of the Spirit, as connected with the work of redemption. There are two things clearly implied in the office which the Holy Spirit has assumed in regard to this work, namely, that man has fallen from his original excellency, and that he has graciously undertaken to restore him. The way to the holiest, it is true, is fully opened by the blood of Jesus ; and if men would comply with the invitation of mercy, and yield to the most pressing motives and inducements, the communication of the Spirit would have been unnecessary. The introduction of this Divine agent pre-supposes the inveteracy of human corruption, and that man, without his operation, will not return to God, though favoured with the best opportunities, and plied by the most powerful incentives. Notwithstanding the vast provision which has been made for the salvation of mankind, no sinner, without His new-creating influence, would be saved ; and the work of redeeming mercy would have remained unproductive of glory to God, of joy to the Redeemer, and of blessing to the human race.

But all this implies the necessity of regeneration. For, if all means, if the most favourable opportunity, if the work of Christ, would prove unavailing to the salvation of a single soul, without the effectual operation of the Spirit, the necessity of conversion is most evident and absolutely certain. He has undertaken to produce this great and universal change on the heart of man ; and it is only by his agency that the gospel, in any case, becomes the power of God unto salvation. He will convince the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. When he does operate on the mind, he changes the character, and produces effects suited to himself, and worthy of his influence. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit."

V. The necessity of regeneration appears from the nature of true and eternal happiness. If happiness depend on the frame and disposition of the mind, on the

state of the heart towards God, on the right exercise of the faculties in obedience to his will, and in subserviency to his glory, it is most certain that it cannot be enjoyed in an unregenerate state. To think of being happy without holiness, and without the favour of God, is not less absurd than to expect health in combination with disease, or safety without salvation. Man is so formed, that infinite good alone can satisfy him,—that good which is to be found in God, a Being who comprehends in himself boundless goodness and blessedness. He feels, that all the worldly gratifications to which he has access are not equal to his desires, nor to his capacities of enjoyment; and, animated by the hope of some greater good, always in prospect, but never attained, he perseveres in his pursuit of imaginary good, amid many disappointments and sorrows. It is regeneration that rectifies this disorder of the faculties, and that directs this desire of great and immortal happiness to God, as the only satisfying portion of the soul.

Man, it is probable, often deceives himself in regard to the future, by the circumstances in which he is now placed, and which are peculiar to this state of probation. He concludes, that because he has here much gratification, even while his heart is alienated from God, and opposed to his authority, the same or similar enjoyments will exist hereafter: that if he is now deriving a considerable share of what he deems happiness from those springs which the benevolence of the Creator has commanded to flow, he may confidently expect its continuance in another state of being. In accordance with this expectation, he imagines to himself a heaven replenished with objects fitted to regale the senses, and adapted still more than the circumstances by which he is now surrounded to his animal or intellectual gratification. In this expectation, however, he deceives himself; and overlooks the fact, that the Divine goodness of which he is now the object, is designed to lead him to repentance,—to the experience of such a change of character as will issue in a perfect suitableness to the pure society and services of heaven. But when this change is not effected, when the bias against holiness remains, and the same

disrelish of all that pertains to the God of salvation continues to characterise the mind, there is obviously an unfitness in the tastes, desires, and affections, for the kingdom of God. Were there an intermediate state in which these tastes and desires might be gratified, where sinful beings might live without God, and at the same time enjoy his bounty, they might please themselves with the hope that their condition would not be felt as painful and wretched, though their nature and character remained depraved. But in eternity there is no state like the present in which there is a mixture of good and evil: the separation between the righteous and the wicked, the regenerate and the unregenerate, is complete and eternal: and all are either elevated to endless perfection and happiness, or continue for ever in sin and misery.

But the unregenerate are incapable of participating in the happiness of heaven, even were they admitted into it. That happiness is enjoyed exclusively in connection with the character, the formation of which is begun in regeneration, and which consists in conformity to Christ, the image of the Invisible God. Heaven is inhabited only by persons in whom this holy character is perfected, who feel the same delight in God, love to the Redeemer, and affectionate regard for his friends, which were here experienced. Their duties, engagements, and enjoyments, are all of a spiritual nature, and performed in the immediate presence of God. "They are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them." The discovery of the Divine glory fills them with inexpressible joy; their delight and complacency in God form a considerable share of their happiness; while this is enhanced by the consideration that this God is their God for ever and ever. With deeper sense of obligation than they had attained while here, with more enlarged views of the riches of redeeming mercy, they cease not to ascribe salvation, and honour, and glory, to the Lamb that was slain, and who redeemed them to God by his blood.

But what is there in these services to afford enjoyment

to unregenerate persons? If the principles of the new nature, the features of the spiritual character, which Divine grace produces in those in whom it effectually operates, be disliked by them in this world, where they are mingled with infirmities; how could they be endured in those glorious regions in which they will be perfect? If the worship of God be irksome here, what pleasure could be derived from it in heaven? If there be no loveliness seen in the excellency and holiness of God in the present state, will the contemplation of them afford gratification in the world to come? On the contrary, would not the bright display of the Divine excellencies, the spirituality and employments of the worshippers, the themes of their conversation, the sources of their joy, and the chief grounds of their praise and thanksgiving, be opposed to their taste and wishes, and be the occasion of giving them pain? It is the pure in heart alone who are capable of seeing God, and of beholding his face in righteousness: it is they only who can rejoice in him as their own God, and their portion for ever. As for others, they could receive no satisfaction from the presence of a God whose anger they dreaded, whose greatness and glory filled them with terror, whose character and will are totally different from theirs, and who, though he allowed them to mingle with his friends, marked them as his enemies. The evil passions of their depraved nature would be awakened into greater activity by the songs of adoration continually addressed to him, and by the consciousness of the dissimilarity of their views and feelings to those of the persons by whom they were surrounded.

A very considerable portion of the happiness of the redeemed in heaven will arise from a view of the Saviour's glory: so much so, that the perfect blessedness of the unseen state is often denoted by the expressions, to be with the Lord, to be with Christ, to behold his glory. The praises of the celestial inhabitants are addressed to God and to the Lamb:—and to the Lamb that was slain is ascribed power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. But is it not true of all unregenerate persons that they undervalue the Saviour;—that though in himself infinitely

lovely, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, they discern no form nor comeliness for which he is to be desired:—that they make light of Christ, and will not come to Him that they might have life? They are destitute of love to his character, and have therefore no relish for his presence, no delight in his happiness and glory. But without a change of nature, will not the same state of mind prevail in the world to come? With such disposition of soul, what enjoyment could it afford in heaven, to behold that Saviour who redeemed his people from all iniquity, crowned with honour and glory: and to hear the myriads who had here cordially embraced his salvation, worshipping him as Lord of all; singing a new song, saying, "Thou art worthy, for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests?" With the frame of heart supposed, what enjoyment could be derived by persons who had persisted in despising and rejecting the Saviour, from the view of his dignity and authority on the throne of universal dominion? The consciousness of having done him infinite wrong, of having refused the efficacy of his precious blood, would overwhelm the soul with dismay and terror before his infinite majesty and glory. The view of Him in heaven would be as unsupportable as his appearance will be to the impenitent in that awful day, when they shall say to the mountains and to the rocks, fall on us, and hide us from the wrath of the Lamb.

Further: scripture represents the happiness of heaven as consisting partly in the society of angels, and of the redeemed from among men. All who are admitted into those blissful regions are associated with holy and exalted intelligences, with an innumerable company of angels, with the general assembly and church of the first-born; with patriarchs and prophets, apostles and martyrs; with all who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. How would unregenerate men feel in such society as this? While they could not refrain from admiring their humility and disinterested benevolence, would they sympathise with their love to God,

zeal for his glory, hatred of sin, and practice of holiness? How would they feel when they perceived these holy persons shunning them while they pitied them,—loving each other with fervent affection and friendship, but standing aloof from the enemies of their Lord? Would it give them pleasure to hear them rehearse the wonders of redeeming love and mercy, the gracious procedure of God towards them on all the way in which he led them in the wilderness? Would they not soon wish to retire from a society in which they were solitary, and join companions more accordant with their character? They could not remain in a place where all were perfectly holy—where the inhabitants ceased not day or night in saying, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of Hosts. To be doomed to pass an eternity in the midst of beings of unmingled holiness, engaged in spiritual exercises, and whose happiness arose from spiritual enjoyments, would to a man not born again, be absolute torture.

Finally: the inhabitants of heaven will be employed in active services, suited to beings in an elevated and perfect state of existence. The nature of all their employments, we cannot at present determine; but they will be productive of happiness only to those whose hearts glow with love to God, and disinterested benevolence to all who bear his image. All the services in which they will be engaged will be closely related to God;—attendance on his will, contemplating his glories, and celebrating his praises. How will unsanctified man relish a perpetuity of such employments? Would not the hearts of sinners disrelish them, if possible, still more there than they do here? If their nature and character were in heaven the same as on earth, would they not continue to be characterised by the same ungodliness and unrighteousness, and give rise in the celestial regions to all those consequences of depravity which prevail in this world. A change of place from earth to heaven would only tend to increase their misery by placing more sensibly in their view services which they abhorred, a society for which they had no congeniality, a Saviour whom they had despised and rejected, and a God to whose character and claims they had done infinite wrong.

But perhaps it may be alleged, that were sinners admitted into heaven, their character would improve when placed in proximity to myriads of holy and happy beings. They might gradually acquire a taste for what they here abhorred, and derive happiness from sources of enjoyment to which on earth they were utter strangers. In answer to this, I remark,

VI. That the time for regenerating the nature of man is restricted to this life. The ministration of that Holy Spirit, through whom alone it can be accomplished, is confined to this world. There will be no subsequent dispensation of grace and moral discipline; no more sacrifice for sin; no further paternal chastisement and means of spiritual improvement. This only is the state of trial; beyond is the state of rewards and of punishment;—a state in regard to the finally impenitent, in which the natural and penal consequences of sin shall be endured, unaccompanied by any circumstances of alleviation.

This statement does not rest upon conjecture, but is taught by the unequivocal testimony of scripture. If there were any period of probation beyond this life, in which means were to be used for bringing men to repentance, and in which hope might be entertained of restoration to holiness and happiness, what is intended by the words of Christ, “I must work the works of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh wherein no man can work?” Or, what is meant by the exhortation, “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is neither work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest?” The obvious and true import of this language is, that the present is the only dispensation in which any change can take place on the nature and state of man towards God, and for eternity; that death is the ultimate limit of the period given to make a choice between endless happiness and misery; that now only is the accepted time, and that this only is the day of salvation.

This position is so clearly founded in scripture, that to adduce any additional proof of it is unnecessary. The tenor, bearing, as well as explicit announcement of Divine revelation, teach us, that the state after death is unalter-

able ; that the Judge of all will pronounce the irreversible sentence : " He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." It is here only that a change can be effected on human character ; for it is in this world only that the Divine Spirit operates in creating men anew in Christ Jesus ; in communicating those gracious tastes and habits which can render heaven and its happiness an endless blessing. How important, in this view, is the declaration of our Lord, " Except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God : marvel not that I said unto you, ye must be born again !"

Regeneration, then, is absolutely necessary to the enjoyment of future happiness, not because it gives a title to that happiness, for that arises solely from justification by the righteousness of Christ ; but because without it there is no meetness to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. Unless this fitness to enjoy the blessedness which God has prepared for his servants in the kingdom of heaven, be acquired here by those gracious influences which are communicated in connexion with the gospel, man will remain for ever a depraved and miserable outcast from God, from Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, from holy angels, from the glorified family of the redeemed, and from that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore.

CHAPTER IX.

REGENERATION: THE AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT
NECESSARY TO ITS PRODUCTION.

HAVING shown, at considerable length, the nature and necessity of regeneration, we now proceed to notice the Agent by whom this great change is produced. This topic requires to be discussed with scriptural sobriety and caution, lest, when proving the necessity of the Spirit's operation, in order to conversion, we seem to divest man in his fallen condition of his free agency and responsibility, or, appear to teach the unscriptural doctrine, that the communication of Divine influence is, on the part of God, a boon of justice, and not of sovereign grace.

I shall consider, in the first place, the grounds on which the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary in conversion: secondly, the evidence by which this doctrine is established: thirdly, shew that the influence of the Spirit is certainly effectual in conversion.

First: let us consider the grounds on which the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary in conversion. This necessity is not owing,

I. To any want of adaptation in the means which Divine wisdom employs to the production of man's conversion to God. The gospel, on the contrary, furnishes means contrived with infinite skill, for arresting the attention, engaging the affections, and elevating the heart of man to God, and to holiness. We cannot conceive any external means to possess greater persuasive efficacy than the disclosures of Divine revelation, the views which it exhibits of the gracious character of God, the motives and arguments which it presents to a cordial and entire compliance with his will. These motives are

addressed to men as reasonable and responsible beings, capable of receiving instruction and direction, of being allured by the proposal of infinite good, and awakened to consideration by the threatening of the greatest evil. It is on account of its admirable aptitude, as a means for the attainment of these ends, that the gospel is sometimes spoken of as the cause of regeneration. It is declared to be the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth.

The means which God employs for the conversion of man, are worthy of himself. They in no respect resemble the absurd and incongruous action of him who would reason with the wind, or expostulate with irrational animals; but they are like His, who proposes the accomplishment of an end, and who adopts means obviously fitted to its attainment. With what urgent entreaty and tenderness, with what affectionate importunity, does he persuade all to whom the gospel is addressed, to be reconciled to him! "Incline your ear, and come unto me; hearken, and your soul shall live. How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways. Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live." What awful representations, too, are given of the criminality of those who neglect the means of grace, and who do not improve them to the salvation of their souls! Vengeance is to be taken on those who obey not the gospel; they are to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.

How much fitted is the view which the gospel gives of the character and procedure of God, to affect the human heart, and to win it entirely over to the love of God! It reveals him, not only as the Sovereign Ruler, but as the compassionate Father of mankind, who has pitied them in their guilt and misery; who has adopted a method for their recovery infinitely wise and merciful; and who has sent his Son into the world, in the form of

a servant, to suffer and die in their room. It presents this Divine Redeemer in all the characters of graciousness and of saving power, as possessing all the blessings which sinful man can require to his perfect restoration to holiness and happiness, and as inviting and commanding his return, in all the terms of compassionate tenderness, and persuasive kindness. It intimates, at the same time, the fearful responsibility which is incurred by a rejection of these overtures of mercy, a disregard and neglect of this great salvation. What means could be more skilfully framed to effect the conversion of the sinner?

II. The necessity of the Holy Spirit in conversion is not owing to the gospel's requiring from man that which is simply impossible. Had this been the case, man would have been excusable for non-compliance. Had he been commanded to do that which is physically impossible for him to perform,—as, for example, to fly in the air, or to change the established laws and course of nature, he could not be blamed for disobedience. But the gospel enjoins him to pursue the ends of his being, the purposes for which he was formed, and his faculties bestowed—to love, fear, and glorify God. It commands the wicked to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and to return to the Lord, who will have mercy upon him; and to God, who will abundantly pardon. It presents the strongest possible reasons, and the most touching motives, to induce us to yield the required obedience,—motives derived from the character of God, from the infinite value of his favour, from the dignity, happiness, and glory, which he promises to bestow on all who love him. Surely, then, the gospel requires from all men that only which all men must feel to be most reasonable.

III. Neither does the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit to the conversion of man arise from the want of requisite natural faculties. We possess all the faculties of understanding and will which are characteristic of man as an intelligent and accountable being; if these, or any of them had been totally lost by the fall, it would have been as incongruous to address promises and

commands to him, as it would be to the inferior animals. If man had not possessed these powers, he would be absolutely incapable of either knowing or doing right or wrong; and would not be the subject of praise or blame, of rewards or punishment. But does not his conscience affirm, and does not the scripture testify, that he is criminal in the commission of sin? Is he not commanded to do those very things which he performs only by the power of the Spirit? "Repent, and be converted:" "Turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways:" "Wash thy heart from wickedness;" this is the authoritative language in which God addresses man—language which obviously assumes, that man has the powers requisite to constitute him the subject of moral government. The fact, that God, a Being of infinite justice, has issued such commands, proves that those to whom they are addressed are in the possession of all the faculties requisite to constitute them accountable for their conduct; that is, all the faculties required to constitute them responsible agents.

Accordingly, God deals with men as responsible agents; and gives unequivocal intimation, that he holds them answerable to himself for every part of their conduct. He has appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man which he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. But does not this responsibility to God imply that men are capable of using the means of being what they ought to be;—that they can understand the nature of the circumstances in which sin has placed them, and of the remedy which the gospel unfolds;—that they can attend on the ordinances of religion, and seriously reflect on the claims of God to their love and obedience;—that they can supplicate pardoning mercy, and regenerating and sanctifying grace;—that they can meditate on the solemnities of death, judgment, and eternity;—and that they can, and ought, often to examine whether their hopes of immortal happiness be well founded? They possess all the powers of free and accountable agents without supernatural influence. Why, then, is the work of the Holy

Spirit necessary to the conversion of man? To this I answer,

IV. That it is owing to the want of disposition, or inclination, to use aright the powers he possesses. To this cause alone is it attributable, that no one will ever repent and believe on Christ to the saving of the soul, who is not made willing by the power of the Holy Spirit. The scriptures, accordingly, while they reason and expostulate with man as an intelligent being, and moral agent, represent his disposition as so averse from God and from true godliness, that in point of fact he will not come to Christ till this frame of mind is changed. He who knows perfectly what is in man, and who foresees the end from the beginning, declares that his heart is desperately wicked,—that it is enmity against God, and is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. This is the only source of impenitence and unbelief, the cause which operates in every single instance in preventing the sinner from receiving the Saviour.

It is unnecessary to multiply quotations from scripture in proof of a position so obvious. Whenever the sacred writers assign a reason for the rejection of Christ and of his salvation, they refer to the prevailing bias and disposition of the heart. The language of our Lord to the Jews was, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, *and ye would not.*” Sinners are represented as making light of the message of salvation, as refusing it, as neglecting it, as hating knowledge, as loving darkness and not the light, and as putting away from them the word of God. Are not these the acts of deliberate and depraved disposition and intention? “Because I have called and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded, but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof.” “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” The cause here assigned for the spiritual blindness of the natural man is the peculiar state of his heart. This is

earthly, alienated from God, and hostile to the things of the Spirit; and, consequently, the mind is blind to the real beauty and glory of the gospel.

The truth of this view of the subject is confirmed by those passages which describe the nature of the change which is wrought in the conversion of man. These speak of a renovation of heart and will. "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and will give you a heart of flesh." This gracious promise clearly intimates that in regeneration a new disposition is communicated to man, different and opposite to that which is natural to him. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;"—words which imply that till the day of power arrives men are not willing,—and that the work of the Holy Spirit consists in removing the hostile bias of the heart, and in producing a cordial compliance with the requirements of the gospel. When it is said, that the Lord opened Lydia's heart, that she attended to the things which were spoken of Paul, the declaration evidently signifies, that though she had previously the natural capacity of attending to the doctrines taught by the apostle, her attention was actually given only in consequence of a change of disposition.

If it be not to the want of capacity but of disposition, that men do not receive the Saviour, it may very naturally be asked, why is it so often and so strongly affirmed, that they cannot? Would not such phraseology seem to imply, that it is not from the want of will that men do not repent, but from the absence of physical and natural power? "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him. How can ye believe who receive honour one of another? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, and the leopard his spots? Then may ye who are accustomed to do evil, learn to do well." In order to understand this language, we must remember, that the only conceivable hindrances on the part of man to the performance of an action, are the want of natural power, and unwillingness or disinclination. But impenitence and unbelief are not owing to

the want of natural power : for this, man, as an intelligent and moral agent, unquestionably possesses. They must, therefore, proceed from the disposition and disinclination of the heart. The expressions in question emphatically denote the fixed and unalterable frame and determination of the heart ; and the *certain* prevalence of its unholy and hostile bias. It is thus that those phrases are used in the intercourse of mankind. We say to those who urge us to the adoption of a particular line of conduct that we cannot do it, merely because we feel strongly disinclined to it. In like manner, the strong natural affection which woman bears to her infant offspring is spoken of as if it rendered it impossible for her ever to disregard it. "*Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb ?*"

In point of fact, then, it is as certain that no man will ever really and fully turn of himself to God through Christ, as if he were absolutely prevented by natural and insuperable barriers, for which he was in no way accountable. But the only hindrance is his disinclination. This is to be viewed—

I. As an unwillingness to come to God through Christ. This state of mind was indicated by the conduct of Adam immediately after the fall, when he fled from God, and attempted to hide himself from his presence. Might we not suppose that he would instantly turn to God, and cast himself upon that Divine goodness which he had already so abundantly experienced ? But he had departed from God ; and his mind by that one act of apostacy having become depraved, he soon felt disinclined to return. It continues to be thus with all his offspring. They are indisposed to humble themselves before their Maker, to acknowledge their desert, and to accept of his proffered mercy. They will not come to Christ that they might have life.

II. Their unwillingness is confirmed by their strong attachment to other things. Objects of sight and sense now assume an undue ascendancy over the mind. Things seen and temporal awaken a deeper interest than those things which are unseen and eternal : and hence, when

the message of salvation is addressed to them, they all with one consent, begin to make excuse. Their hearts are so entirely preoccupied with earthly things, with more congenial objects, that the effort to detach their affections is painful and irksome; and, when made at all, is made feebly, and is speedily relinquished. They have no enjoyment in God, nor any relish for his presence; but they have some pleasure in sin and in the world; and to sin and the world, therefore, in some form or other, they cleave for their happiness. There is in them an utter heartlessness in regard to God and to all that relates to him; but they are active and alive in respect to objects and scenes of momentary duration.

Nor is this unhappy condition changed by transient convictions of the excellency of God's law, and the duty and desirableness of rendering obedience. The love of earthliness and sin predominates over every better thought; and through the prevailing bias of the heart, sin deceives and maintains its dominion. The desires and affections, as they do not rest on God, or on holiness, or on spiritual objects, seek their gratification from this vain world; till, at length, habits are confirmed, and become an enforcement to original disinclination to godliness. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. Objects which it is their duty to love, are, owing to the abiding disposition of the heart, loved, to the neglect of God, and with the supreme and devoted attachment which is due to him alone. The heart,—that which fixes the determination and character of the man,—is already engaged; and in this state, though the gospel presents objects of transcendent moral loveliness, fitted to arrest the attention, and to win the entire homage of the soul,—objects, too, which claim the immediate, the first consideration of man—they are exhibited to his view in vain. They are to him what the most exquisite musical sounds are to a person altogether disinclined to listen to them; or, what the finest landscape in nature is to him who has no eye to perceive; or, what the most finished work of art is to the man who is incapable of

appreciating its merits, and who regards it with indifference. With minds already occupied, and naturally unwilling as men are to turn to God, however sweet the sound of salvation is to the perishing, and of liberty to the captives, they are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.

III. This indisposition or disinclination of man to turn to God is productive of strong aversion and enmity to him. This, indeed, is its natural concomitant: for wherever there is an unwillingness to be fully reconciled to him whom we have injured, there will arise feelings of hostility towards him. Accordingly, men are represented as saying unto God, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." Their mind is said to be enmity against God, and not subject to his law. They are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart. They like not to retain God in their knowledge:—they forget God:—he is not in all their thoughts:—they live without him in the world. They would fain, therefore, disown his authority, and feel themselves entirely released from the control of his laws. Their language is in regard to God and to the Redeemer, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us."

This dissatisfaction extends to all the faculties and powers of man. The hostile disposition in the heart diffuses its hostile influence through the whole man; and renders the body as well as the soul instrumental to its sway. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.* Through the influence of this enmity, the understanding is spiritually blinded, the affections are alienated, the desires and aversions, the hopes and fears,

* Rom. iii. 9—20.

the joys and sorrows, are all of an earthly character, and man is entirely estranged from his Maker.

As the principle of hostility extends its influence to the whole nature of man, so does it refer not only to God, but to all that relates to his holy will. Hence the dislike which is felt to all that bears the image of God ;—to the purity and spirituality of his law ;—the ordinances of religion which he has appointed ;—and even to the tenders of that glorious gospel which presents a free and full salvation. If we inquire into the real cause of aversion to this great and gratuitous blessing—a blessing which we might have supposed would have been universally hailed with delight,—we shall find that it originates in the enmity of the human heart to God and to holiness. If a salvation had been offered apart from these, which would have afforded exemption from all the natural and penal consequences of sin, who would have rejected it ? But when men are told, that the end for which Christ gave himself for us was to redeem us from all iniquity, that his salvation mainly consists in giving deliverance from the love, power, and pollution of sin, and in bringing us to God,—they feel that they have no desire for it, and that they prefer being without it. In this state of mind, a Saviour from sin has no beauty in their estimation ;—redemption from corruption which they voluntarily cherish, is not perceived to be a blessing,—conversion to God, and to holiness, is offensive to them—and even those in whom the Holy Spirit produces this change, they find it difficult to tolerate.

IV. This hostile disposition is not a mere passive state of mind ; it gives direct resistance to the will and authority of God. Our Lord, accordingly, has taught us, that those who are not with him are against him, that those who do not cordially comply with his designs, oppose them. In what various forms, and continued effort, has man presented active resistance to the Redeemer ? He has repulsed the overtures of his mercy, recommended and enforced as they are by all the persuasive power of his agonies and death : he has shut Him out from his heart who has won a title to his superior gratitude and love : he has closed his eyes against

the light of the day-spring from on high which has visited him, and gives the preference to darkness;—and with stoutness and obduracy of will, he has put away from him the word of eternal life. What are the circumstances, or rank, of life, in which the Saviour of sinners has not been opposed, and his salvation slighted and neglected? As he was treated by the Jews, not with indifference, but with active enmity, so have sinful men despised and rejected him, and resisted the accomplishment of his gracious designs. He who gave his life a ransom for many, who made himself poor that sinners through his poverty might be made rich, has been assailed by human power, when at its highest, by human learning embodied in the charms of eloquence, by philosophers, supported by princes, by the hostility of unregenerate man in all ages, and in the various forms of talent which he can command or employ. Nor has this active opposition been given by man to the Saviour from the want of a capacity to comprehend the gracious character of his mission;—for his intellectual powers fit him to ascertain the movements, and measure the distance, of the heavenly bodies: nor because he is void of a heart to feel;—for he is susceptible of the strongest attachments, and of grateful affection to his benefactors: nor because he has no sense of right and wrong;—for he perceives the force of moral obligation, and by the constitution of his nature approves of virtue and disapproves of vice. But his opposition to Christ arises from the prevailing disposition of his heart, his aversion to God and to holiness. It is this which makes man a rebel against his Maker, which leads him to oppose the Saviour, resist the Holy Spirit, and continue in impenitence and in unbelief. It is this which makes him deaf to the sounds of mercy, blind to the glories of God in the person of Christ, and refuse the forgiveness which is freely offered to him because its reception requires a turning of heart to God through Jesus Christ. I remark, therefore,

V. That this prevailing disposition of heart opposed to God, forms the only hindrance to the performance of our duty in all its parts. But for the operation of this, we

should do what the law requires, to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and our neighbour as ourselves. We should possess the very disposition which is here enjoined. Possessing the disposition, the external action, when required by the Divine law, would, of course, be performed. As now, the powers of the soul, and the members of the body, are made instruments of sin; so, in the case supposed, they would be servants to righteousness, unto holiness. They would fully accord with the state of the heart. We should thus love and obey God perfectly, in all circumstances. The only reason, therefore, why man does not perfectly love and obey his Maker, and cordially comply with all his will, is, not the want of sufficient natural powers, but the existence of prevailing disinclination. Till this is subdued, and a disposition the very contrary put in its room, no change of circumstances, no extent of religious privileges, and no advancement in intellectual power, will induce man truly to repent, and to turn to God.

VI. This, as it is the only, so is it a permanent hindrance to the conversion of man, till subdued by the Holy Spirit. Its operation is so uniform, so general, and so prevailing, that no person ever has come, or ever will come to Christ, till this state of heart is changed. This melancholy truth we might infer, with considerable certainty, from what we know of the unvarying and permanent action of prevailing dispositions and habits, whether they be good or evil. If we, whose powers and experience are so limited, can speak with so much certainty of the line of conduct which free agents will pursue, when we know the bias of their hearts, with what absolute precision does he foresee this conduct, to whom all hearts are open, and who can most accurately estimate the nature and force of their most latent tendencies and desires. If we could say of a thousand individuals, perfectly holy, or of a thousand individuals perfectly depraved, that they would yield to a certain motive when presented to them, just because the state of their hearts is alike, must not the all-seeing God, before whom all things are naked and open, have the most absolute knowledge of the conduct of his creatures?

But what does he affirm concerning the necessity of the Holy Spirit to change the human heart? No man can come to me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. . No man can say that Jesus is Lord, that is, practically submit to him as a Saviour and Sovereign, but by the Holy Ghost. This Divine agent is the author of regeneration in every case in which it is experienced: and this proves that man is not naturally disposed to repent; that his disinclination to turn to God is so strong and inveterate, that the power of the Almighty alone can remove it. . Whatever may be his feelings with regard to religion, or his alarm of conscience, or his desires of amendment, they are, and always will be, without the influence of the Spirit, earthly and unholy. The necessity of his agency to conversion, is demonstration of the humbling fact, that our natural disposition is opposed to God, to our holiness, and to our happiness.

VII. This disposition is cherished under circumstances peculiarly aggravating, inasmuch as they are powerfully fitted to render it otherwise. The God of holiness has revealed himself as the God of mercy—rich in mercy, delighting in mercy, abundant in mercy. He has set before us his own claims to our love, the extent of our obligations, the awfulness of our prospects, the vastness, the constraining power of his kindness—everything by which the heart might be touched and won: he has presented to us his own Son, veiling his glories by the assumption of our nature; dwelling among sinful men; sorrowing and suffering for the guilty wanderers; weeping over their distresses; praying for their forgiveness, and dying for their salvation; and yet their disposition remains hostile to God, and reckless of perdition. It is so averse to him, and so strongly and desperately attached to sin, that not all these manifestations of the tenderest compassion, that not all that God has ever spoken in his word or in his providence, that not all the patience and forbearance which he exercises, that not all his invitations, or entreaties, or terrors, that not all the glories of redeeming love displayed by the death of the Cross, will ever change this heart, so intensely and astonishingly evil.

Yet, the heart of man is accessible to considerations of duty, of gratitude, and of interest ; it is susceptible of the most generous kindness, and the most devoted attachment. He whose understanding raises him so highly in the scale of being, who can reason so accurately, and form plans for his future welfare, acts the part of a fool in regard to his great and eternal concerns. He who discourses with truth and eloquence of God, his being, perfections, and moral government, remains all the while in apostacy from him, and in rebellion against him. He who has so strong a sense of right and wrong, that he can perceive the reasonableness of giving to all their due, and powerfully plead for the injured rights of his fellow-men, can wilfully wrong God, his first, his best Benefactor. He who is endued with a self-reflecting power by which he is capable of viewing himself in relation to the past, the present, or the future, does not seriously consider the things which belong unto his peace. "He that fears his fellow-creature, defies his Maker ; he that is grateful to an earthly benefactor, insults an heavenly one ; he that shrinks from bodily harm, plunges into irretrievable ruin ; he that attaches boundless importance to time, trifles with eternity. And all this will he continue to do, amidst the revealed glories of heaven, and terrors of hell ; amidst the warnings of wrath and the wooings of mercy ; amidst the tears of the Saviour, and the lamentations of angels ; amidst the reproofs of his conscience, and the anticipations of destruction."*

This is, indeed, most humbling to man. It shows that his sin and depravity are from himself, and his own fault. It proves that his conduct, in regard to God, and to his own eternal happiness, is altogether inexcusable. His own conscience charges him with the guilt of ingratitude to God for unnumbered mercies—for a gift of transcendant value ; with the sin of withholding from him, the love of his heart, and the obedience which is due ; and with the crime, of inconceivable magnitude, of living in the neglect and the refusal of the salvation of God. His condition is represented by the man who appeared at the

* Hinton on the Holy Spirit.

wedding feast without the wedding garment, and who, when examined by the king as to the reason of his conduct, was speechless.

Is not the conduct of man, also, in regard to his Maker, illustrative of the goodness of God? It is the conduct of a rebel, who refuses to be reconciled to his sovereign; of a subject, who resists the payment of the tribute due to his prince, when he has the means of doing so; of a debtor, who wastes on his amusements and vices, the property which he owes to his creditor. How wonderful is the patience of God;—his grace, in offering pardon to man, notwithstanding all this ill desert; his mercy, in proclaiming a remedy from the deepest misery, to the chief of sinners; and his infinite kindness in adding to all means, the ministration of the Spirit! This is compassion without a parallel. It is the boundless goodness of that God, who has declared himself in his inspired word to be love.

This doctrine teaches—

I. That the salvation of man is altogether of grace. His sanctification as well as justification. Ministers should bear this in mind in preaching. All should act on its truth.

II. The doctrine of the influence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of man is most encouraging. It has been represented as calculated to produce indolence, if not despondency. The representation of scripture on the contrary bears a most cheering aspect.—A new heart will I give you. The encouragement presented to all by this consideration is unspeakably great.—The dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall live.

III. This doctrine explains to us the real source of those extraordinary effects which have always accompanied the gospel. In the history of Christianity there are many facts utterly unaccountable, but on the supposition

that they proceed from a Divine influence.—Saul of Tarsus —The jailor of Philippi, etc. — The revivals of religion. But these conversions you will say, were sudden. Regeneration in every case is instantaneous and complete.

IV. This doctrine entirely accords with the representation of the glory and happiness to which man is to be exalted through the Redeemer. We are not surprised that extraordinary effects should result from the death of Christ : on the contrary, the cause must be always more wonderful than any effects that can proceed from it. Is there not a propriety in conferring all possible honour on Christ ?

CHAPTER X.

REGENERATION: THE AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT NECESSARY TO ITS PRODUCTION—THE EVIDENCE BY WHICH THIS DOCTRINE IS ESTABLISHED.

WE have seen the grounds on which the work of the Holy Spirit is necessary in conversion. It has appeared, that notwithstanding the powers and means which man possesses, he will never truly turn to God, till the operation of heavenly influence is experienced. We are now prepared to proceed to prove what was mentioned as the

II. Proposition in reference to this subject, namely, that it is by the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit alone that man is regenerated: or, in other terms, that his influence is absolutely necessary in conversion. The evidence furnished in proof of this by Divine revelation,—the only complete and satisfactory source of knowledge on this subject,—is full and decisive.

I. The presence or absence of the Spirit is sometimes mentioned as the criterion of a converted or unconverted state. Thus, it is affirmed, that “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, are the sons of God. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.”* Of ungodly men, it is said by the apostle Jude, that they are “sensual, having not the Spirit.” We are unequivocally taught by these passages that our having the Spirit is decisive evidence of a converted

* Romans, viii. 9—10.

state ; and that our being destitute of the Spirit is proof that we are unregenerate. The absolute necessity of the Spirit, therefore, follows as an obvious consequence.

There is no way in which it can be attempted to resist this conclusion, but by alleging that though the influence of the Spirit was absolutely necessary to the conversion of men in the apostolic age, it is not required now :—a position so palpably trifling and untenable that it does not demand or merit refutation.

II. God claims the work of regenerating man as entirely his own, and declares it to be the effect of his agency on the human mind. This he does, not by mere incidental expressions, but by the numerous explicit statements, and by the general tenor, of that book which he has given as a revelation of himself. When he promises to produce this change, he intimates in the clearest manner that he will accomplish it, not by secondary causes, but by his own immediate power. “The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean. From all your idols will I cleanse you ; a new heart also will I give you, and a new Spirit will I put within you ; and I will take the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh ; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes. This shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; after those days saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts ; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” These promises shew the greatness of the change produced in regeneration ; and that it is effected by the almighty power of Him who calls for things that are not, and they come, Ezek. xxxvi. 25.

The New Testament is not less explicit on this subject than the Old. “But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. It

is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure," 1 Cor. i. 30; Phil. i. 6. To these declarations, I shall only add, that of the apostle John, in which he ascribes the conversion of all believers to God: "who were born," says he, "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God." The truth which is here taught, that God himself is the only efficient cause of conversion, and that it is entirely the effect of his agency on the human mind, pervades the scriptures.

III. All the parts of which this great change consists, and all the exercises of mind involved in it, are ascribed to God. Whatever is necessary to give the gospel saving effect on the human mind—to arrest the attention, to remove prejudice, to enlighten the understanding, and to engage the affections,—all is attributed to that mighty power that quickens the dead. Serious attention is absolutely necessary to the reception of good from the message of salvation; and hence God complains that in regard to the great things of eternity men do not consider. But the awakening of attention, and the fixing of it on objects which claim, and which deserve it, are of God; for the heart of Lydia he opened to attend to the words that were spoken by Paul. It is also necessary to understand the gospel, to have a right perception of its bearing and import, as intended and adopted for the sinful and the miserable. But it is God that enlightens the eyes of the understanding, that opens the understanding to understand the scriptures: that gives us an understanding, that we may know him that is true. It is also necessary that the word of God should make a lasting impression on the heart—that it should abide there as incorruptible seed, to produce fruit to life everlasting. This too is the work of God whose word is written, not with pen and ink, but by the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. If the new birth be represented as an internal and effectual call from sin and from the world: he by whom it is effected is God. If it be a new creation, God is the Creator. If it consist in a new heart, God is the Framer. If it be a translation from the kingdom of Satan unto that of God's dear Son, it is God who effects the mighty change.

If it be according unto Christ, he who draws is God.

In like manner the exercises of mind involved in conversion are directly ascribed by the sacred writers to the Holy Spirit. To believe on Christ, is, in other words, to be reconciled to God through the Redeemer. But this faith is of the operation of God—is the gift of God. To obey the truth is to repent and to be converted: but the apostle affirms that this is done only through the Spirit. True repentance also is essentially included in conversion, and mainly constitutes that change of mind from which a real turning unto God proceeds: but it is God that gives men repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

IV. The efficacy and entire success of the gospel are ascribed to God. The end for which the gospel is to be preached to men of all nations is, to persuade them to repent and to turn to God, that their sins may be blotted out: and it is only as it is the means of accomplishing this end, that it is successful. But it is declared that this altogether depends on the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit. “Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.—Our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost.” How constantly do the apostles guard us against attributing any measure of their success in publishing the gospel to the means employed; while they teach us to trace it all to the mighty influence of the Spirit of God! The cause in which they had embarked, and to which they had consecrated their energies and their lives, every where prevailed by the power of this Divine Agent; and to Him they ascribed all the glory. “Thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish. To the one we are the savour

of death unto death ; and to the other the savour of life unto life ; and who is sufficient for these things ?” *

The truth of all this is established by the test of experience ;—the experience of all ages. There were three thousand souls converted to Christ on the day of Pentecost by the apostle Peter : the same gospel was preached by Stephen to persons not more ignorant and prejudiced, and in place of embracing it, they blasphemed, and stoned the preacher to death. The success with which it is accompanied has always been thus various. Persons who have long remained deaf to its invitations are, without any change on the external means, awakened, and converted. Multitudes in one place give satisfactory evidence of conversion, while in another, the gospel would seem to be comparatively fruitless.

V. The condition of man is represented to be such as absolutely to require the Holy Spirit to his conversion. The depravity of man contrasted with the greatness and excellency of the change produced in regeneration, renders this Divine agency indispensable. For the disposition of his heart is hostile to holiness and to spirituality—renders him unwilling even to receive deliverance, and induces him to give resistance to the means employed for his redemption. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him.” The obduracy and perversion of the will, and the indisposition of the heart, account for this melancholy fact ;—and they form the reason which our Lord himself assigns, when he says, ye will not come unto me that ye might have life. This description is universally true ; it applies to man naturally in all circumstances, and under the various forms in which he is to be found.

The greatness of the change produced on his nature in regeneration is obvious. The darkness of his understanding must be removed by spiritual light : the heart at present indifferent, and even averse to God, must glow

* 2 Cor. ii. 13—17.

with the affections of gratitude and love towards him; the earthly principle by which he is actuated must give place to a decided and supreme attachment to the authority and the glory of his Maker; and his inclinations to self-indulgence and to sin to which he willingly yields, must be eradicated to make way for better feelings and desires, which will assume the control over him, and urge him to the pursuit and to the attainment of holiness. But is any power less than that of the Almighty adequate to the production of so great, so excellent, so universal a change? He who would entertain any doubt on this subject might satisfy himself by making the attempt. He might employ the most powerful arguments to convince the sinner of his folly; he might prove to him the unreasonableness, the injustice, the deep criminality, of wronging God, his first, and his greatest benefactor; he might appeal to his own sense of right and wrong, to his experience of the variety of the world, to his natural desire after happiness, to all his apprehensions and anticipations of an hereafter; he might set before him all the tender and touching motives to immediate conversion exhibited by the compassion of God, the kindness and condescension of Christ, and the love of the Spirit; and he might mingle his entreaties and expostulations with prayers and tears; and, yet, he would find that the object of his solicitude would not relinquish his love of sin, and that he remained a stranger to the love of God and of holiness. It is possible, indeed, that he might succeed in producing an amendment of character, such a reformation as can be effected by ordinary means, and by vigorous resolutions,—he might persuade him to substitute one set of earthly attachments for another—to exchange intemperance for sobriety—dishonesty for fair dealing and unimpeachable regularity;—profaneness and irreligion for decent behaviour, and constant attendance on God's ordinances: but entirely to change the native disposition of the heart, to subdue its rebellion, and convert the man into a willing subject of God's holy and righteous government,—can only be accomplished by a supernatural and omnipotent agency. The greatness of the change proves the abso-

lute necessity of Divine influence for its production. A transition from the darkness of death and condemnation, into the clear and marvellous light of heaven ;—a resurrection from the tomb in which is buried every holy susceptibility and desire, to a new existence, characterised by new affections, enjoyments, and pursuits ;—a new creation by which the whole man is remodelled, framed according to the will of God, and consecrated to his service and glory,—a change of such magnitude can only be effected by that God who made and who upholds all things.

VI. The necessity of the work of the Spirit to conversion is further evident from the fact, that this is assigned in scripture as a reason of the difference in the characters of different men. There, God is represented as giving regenerating and sanctifying grace to some ; in consequence of which their understandings are enlightened, their hearts are renovated, and their lives are consecrated to God and to holiness. It was in reference to this distinguishing grace that our Lord said, “ I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father : for so it seemed good in thy sight.” On another occasion, when the Jews murmured at his doctrine, he answered and said unto them, “ Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him : and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” In accordance with this doctrine, the apostle Paul, when speaking of the excellency and glory of the gospel, declares, that those who see not its divine beauty and worth must be abandoned to the delusions of their own hearts, and the influence of their great enemy ; while he affirms, that all who discover its loveliness, and relish its provisions of mercy, are enlightened by the immediate operation of God. “ If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the

glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine into them. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." The same apostle, when censuring the arrogant and vain-glorious spirit of the Corinthians, asks, "Who maketh thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" The mighty change which he himself experienced he ascribes altogether to the gracious interposition of God, who had, contrary to his deserts, rescued him from the guilt and misery in which he was involved. "By the grace of God, I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." In accordance with these views, I remark further—

VII. That the necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit has been acknowledged by all good men; and their prayers, as recorded in scripture, show how deeply they felt the importance of his agency to the production of what is good in man. This is so obvious, that it scarcely requires confirmation by particular examples. It manifestly appears throughout Divine revelation. When David supplicates the renovation of his nature, he says, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from me." When the apostle Paul prays for the Ephesians, it is in these words: "For this cause, I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named; that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man." Of himself, this apostle says, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." He includes all his fellow Christians with himself when he affirms, "We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that, the kindness and

love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."

Agreeably to these decisive statements of Divine truth, have not all men of piety in all ages ascribed their conversion to the agency of the Holy Spirit? Have they not owned their absolute dependence upon him for the disposition to loath sin, to confide in the Saviour, to make choice of God for their portion, to delight in his law, and to keep his commandments? Do they not all unite in ascribing to God the glory of their salvation? "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy and thy truth's sake." Do they not individually trace their deliverance from the guilt and misery of an unconverted state to the operation of his grace, and to the power of his Spirit? "He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and trust in the Lord."

VIII. The necessity of the influence of the Holy Spirit appears from the account which scripture gives of the greatness of the power which is exerted in the conversion of man. The change itself is, in consideration of its greatness, called a new birth—a new creation—a resurrection from the dead: and we are explicitly taught that the only power by which it can be affected is that which has given existence to the universe. But as the immortal spirit of man is unspeakably more excellent than the inanimate creation, with all its beauty and splendour, so much the more glorious is the manifestation of that Divine power by which the soul is created anew after the image of God. This is said to be the same as that by which our Lord was raised from the dead: it is, therefore, the power of God. "I cease not," says the apostle, addressing the Ephesians, "to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wis-

dom and revelation in the knowledge of him : the eyes of your understanding being enlightened ; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." *

To these evidences for the necessity of the Spirit's agency in the conversion of men, I shall only add the express affirmation of our Lord, " Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." The absolute necessity of his operation to the production of a saving change is thus most fully established. It only remains in regard to this subject that we consider—

ii. That the influence of the Spirit is certainly effectual in conversion. Wherever he begins to produce a saving change, he invariably accomplishes the work. What are obstructions and difficulties before omnipotence? If it be the good pleasure of God effectually to change the heart, and to turn the sinner to himself, has he not the power to accomplish his purpose? The question therefore is, not whether he can do this, but whether he will do it. This question we answer in the affirmative, and prove this view of it :—

I. From the wisdom of God. One of the characteristics of wisdom is, that it does not begin any work of importance without intending to finish it ; and that, unless there be a sufficient reason for acting otherwise, it proceeds to the completion of what has been begun. " Which of you," said our Lord, " intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish." † If it would be an impeachment of the wisdom of man to engage in an undertaking which he was not able to finish, would not his

* Eph. i. 15—21.

† Luke xiv. 28—34.

conduct be much more chargeable with folly, if he began his work without intending to complete it, though he were able. But the Holy Spirit has the power of finishing whatever he begins ; we may, therefore, be assured, that as his wisdom is unsearchable, and his knowledge infinite, he will in every case in which he enters on the good work of converting the soul of man, bring it to a successful issue.

Again : the excellency of the work, furnishes an additional argument for the truth of the doctrine. This is worthy of God ; and is pre-eminently calculated to shew forth his glory. It displays his grace in extending favour to the undeserving ; his mercy in compassionating the miserable ; his wisdom in constructing with infinite skill a beautiful fabric for his worship and residence ; his holiness in the communication of a Divine nature which is to reflect the image of God ; his almighty power in raising from the ruins of the fall the immortal nature of man, and in investing it with those properties by which it is fitted for a blessed eternity. This new creation is of far superior excellency to the works of nature and of Providence ; in comparison of which the former shall not be remembered nor come into mind. It is to the person in regard to whom it is produced, the commencement of new existence, — an existence which embraces the hopes and joys, the holiness and endless happiness, of man as created anew in Christ Jesus. It is the restoration of a fallen but accountable being to the right direction of his faculties, to the use of new and heavenly principles, to the willing consecration of himself and of his talents to the honour of him to whom he owes his all. Can this work, when entered on by that Holy Spirit who sees the end from the beginning, and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, be abandoned by its Divine Author ?

Further ; this conclusion is confirmed when we consider the objects which the Holy Spirit has in view in the conversion of a sinner. The primary object, doubtless, is the glory of the Divine character and perfections ; — an object which must always possess transcendent value. But in regeneration there is also kindness

intended to the person who is the subject of this work. It is, indeed, an act which pre-eminently shews the love of God. For, without this internal and saving change, of what avail would be the completeness of the atonement of Christ to the salvation of the soul? What end could be attained by the display of the mercy of God in the mission and death of the Redeemer? But there is consistency in the manifestation of this mercy when it issues in the conversion of the sinner, in producing such an effectual change on the bias of his heart, that he becomes willing to be and to do all that the gospel requires. The boundless benevolence in which the work of the Holy Spirit originates, affords ample pledge that he will not withdraw from his undertaking in any case till it is complete. He intends the regenerated soul to be a monument of mercy—to be a memorial of the exceeding riches of God's grace, and of his kindness in Christ Jesus;—and to be capable by its renovated powers, and its heavenly graces, of enjoying immortal happiness. But this kindness can only be shewn, and can only be experienced, where conversion to God is completed. We may therefore be assured that he whose mercy endureth for ever, will not forsake the work of his own hands.

Finally, this conclusion is fully established when we view the work of the Spirit in connection with the work of Christ. When our Lord by his death redeemed his people unto God, he procured for them grace as well as glory; and he consequently obtained for them that Divine Spirit by whose effectual application his grace is administered, and by whose sanctifying operation they are fitted for glory. The peculiar office of the Spirit is to glorify Christ,—to honour him by carrying into full effect the gracious purposes of his death, to bring multitudes to the enjoyment of the blessings of his redemption, and to own and praise him as the author of their deliverance. It is, therefore, not more certain that Christ completed the work which was given him to do, by rendering perfect obedience to the law, by satisfying Divine justice, by laying a foundation on which God may exercise pardoning mercy according to his own

munificence ;—than that, the Holy Spirit will finish the work of conversion in all who have been given to Jesus to save, and whom he undertook to redeem. The truth and faithfulness of God, the honour of the Redeemer, the enjoyment of the recompense of his sufferings, the power and compassion of the Holy Spirit, furnish ground on which we may confidently rely that he who begins a good work in the soul of man, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Why should it ever have been supposed that the contrary might happen ? Why should it have been conceived possible, that those who are eventually converted by the influence of the Spirit, might, notwithstanding his agency, have continued in impenitence, and finally have rejected the gospel ? Merely, we imagine, because the victorious or irresistible grace of the Spirit, it has been thought, destroys free agency. In other words, a man must not be converted against his will. The supposition is indeed preposterous, and shews a total misconception of the nature of the change produced in regeneration. This is a change of will ; so that the sinner is made willing to come to Christ. He is freely but powerfully and effectually drawn to the Redeemer, and with his whole heart accepts of the overtures of mercy, and complies with the proposals of the gospel. There is not a more marked characteristic of real conversion than the eagerness with which the penitent turns to God, cries to him for deliverance, clings to the Saviour as his only hope, deliberately makes choice of his salvation, and resolves to obey his commandments. His understanding, will, and affections, urge him to follow the Redeemer ; and animated by the principle of love to him, he cheerfully dedicates himself to the service and the glory of his Divine Lord. Being made free from the servitude of sin, he turns his feet unto God's testimonies, he makes haste, and delays not to keep his commandments.

Hence the truth and importance of the doctrine of efficacious grace. The tendency of this doctrine is most pure and holy.

I. It teaches us to look to the heart as the seat of sin or of holiness. It is this inward disposition that gives

the character to our moral nature. If this is depraved, the character is polluted in the sight of God, however fair may appear the external acts and habits. If this be alienated from God, no sweetness of disposition, no correctness of outward deportment, no extent of usefulness, can exempt the professor from the character of a rebel against God. Hence the importance of looking narrowly into the state of the heart, of frequently examining its motives and its prevailing dispositions.

II. The tendency of the doctrine of the necessity of the efficacious grace of the Holy Spirit is to teach us our absolute dependence on God. We are thus impressively reminded, that not only is our justification by faith in Christ gratuitous, but that our renovation after the Divine image, that the commencement and completion of our sanctification, are of God. If no man ever has, or ever will come to Christ, till drawn to him by the Holy Spirit, we are taught to whose agency we are to look to give efficacy to the means of grace, whether we use them in reference to others or to ourselves. The ministers of the gospel may, as they are bound in faithfulness to their trust to do, search for suitable and acceptable words; and they are to exhibit the truth to their audience in its fulness, clearness, and Divine glory; but they ought continually to bear in mind, that their discourses, however well fitted they may be to produce the conversion of men, will not attain that infinitely desirable end, without the accompanying power of that Divine Spirit who breathes spiritual life into those who are dead in sins. With the promise of this Spirit to attend their labours in the service of Christ, they ought to prosecute their ministry with zeal, fortitude, and the hope of being honoured with success.

We also ought to feel encouraged by the doctrine concerning the work of the Holy Spirit, to prosecute the duties of our personal salvation with diligence and humble confidence in God. No one who relies on his gracious aid in the use of those means which he has instituted, will be disappointed. Though we can have no claim of right on the ministration of the Spirit, which is entirely of grace, we ought not on this account to despair of obtaining this blessing. On the contrary, our expectations

should be the greater, that God in this matter deals with us according to his own infinite grace and mercy. The plea which is furnished by this abundant mercy will never be urged in vain by the penitent suppliant, who asks that he may receive, who seeks that he may find, and who knocks that it may be opened unto him. The Hearer of prayer "will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer. He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them."

CHAPTER XI.

REGENERATION: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT EX-
CLUSIVELY—CONSISTENT WITH MAN'S
FREE AGENCY.

HAVING shown the necessity of divine influence to the conversion of man to God, I shall proceed to elucidate some general considerations closely connected with the subject; which, as they are of a practical nature, it is of importance that we should keep in view, whether engaged in defending the doctrine against objections, or in strengthening our convictions of its truth. This doctrine enables us to account for certain effects which have always accompanied Christianity; it is in itself most rational; in place of being calculated to produce despair, it is most encouraging; its tendency is holy, and in this respect entirely accords with the avowed design of Christianity; it is perfectly consistent with man's moral agency and accountableness.

I. The doctrine of divine influence, according to the view we have taken of it, explains the cause of certain effects which have always, more or less, accompanied Christianity. They have, indeed, existed in connexion with revealed religion from the earliest period; but they are more numerous as well as striking under the new dispensation. It was formerly remarked, that the most favourable circumstances frequently fail of any salutary effect; while, in other instances, means apparently less powerful and promising, are attended with converting efficacy. We have a striking exemplification of this in the insensibility of those who were privileged with the ministry of our Lord; a ministry, which we might very naturally conceive would have been productive of extra-

ordinary results. But the fact was so much the reverse of this, that the Messiah is represented as saying, in regard to the fruitlessness of his ministrations, "I have laboured in vain; I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain," Isa. xlix. 3—10.

On the other hand, the first discourse which the apostles delivered in opening the new dispensation on the day of Pentecost, was attended by the conversion of three thousand. The persons thus changed were unquestionably Jews, who had been till this era bitter enemies, and furious persecutors, of Christ and his servants; whose habits, opinions, and actual frame of mind, were most hostile to the gospel; and, therefore, it was in a very high degree unlikely that they should become its disciples. Yet, they received the word gladly, and were baptized in consequence of their profession. They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and of prayer.* Multitudes of the same nation were, from time to time, constrained to profess the truth and Divine authority of Christianity; and exhibited its renovating and purifying power by their goodness, fidelity, meekness, temperance. To what agency, less efficient than the mighty power of God, can we reasonably ascribe this extraordinary alteration of character manifested by those who embraced the gospel? When we remember the pride, worldliness, and proscribing spirit natural to them as Jews, and see them unite in the bonds of a holy fellowship with all who, in every place, became the followers of their Lord, have we not presented before us that delightful union prefigured under the similitude of the wolf dwelling with the lamb, and the leopard lying down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together.†

The general depravity of the Gentile nations at the period in question is well known. It was in the highest degree improbable that converts to the Redeemer should be numerous from among them. Yet the change which the gospel produced over the heathen world was rapid, deep, and universal. It was men who originally practised

* Acts, ii.

† Isaiah, ii. 6—10.

all the vices of paganism, who were thoroughly involved in its vileness and atheism, that Christianity arrayed with an assemblage of virtues purer than the disciples of the purest heathen philosophy had ever allowed themselves even to contemplate. It was in a city distinguished for its licentiousness that, through the ministry of the apostles, the power of the gospel was displayed in accomplishing the complete renovation of many of its inhabitants. At Corinth, a flourishing church was planted from among those who had been idolaters and covetous, drunkards and revilers, and extortioners; but whom the doctrines of the cross transformed when they were washed, justified, and sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of God. In Ephesus, where idolatry held its chief seat; in Athens, where science, falsely so called, gave its inhabitants the semblage of wisdom, without diminishing their vices; in Rome, where luxury had introduced all its corruption, and prepared the citizens for a visitation of wrath rather than mercy; it was in these cities that the gospel became the power of God unto salvation, and turned men from the service and abominations of dumb idols to the worship and obedience of the only true God. It everywhere left attestations of the supernatural influence by which it was accompanied—in the moral change which it wrought in men of every kindred and colour, in purifying their thoughts from the grossness and depravity in which they had been held, and in rendering the love of God and man the chief motive of persons who had been previously living in malice and envy—hateful, and hating one another. A change by which the heart that had formerly been corrupt is made holy, and the reality of which is proved by a life of good works, is evidently the effect of Divine power.

Effects of a similar kind have attended the progress of Christianity in every age. They are not exhibited, indeed, in multitudes who bear the Christian name. Nor should we feel disappointed that they are not more frequently presented to our view by the historian; since the influence of religion is to be seen chiefly in the calm of human life. She shuns unnecessary publicity, and retires from ambition, cunning, and violence. She does not

strive, nor cry, nor cause her voice to be heard in the street. The change produced by supernatural influence, through means of the truth, is in innumerable instances concealed from public view. It takes place at so early a period of life, or in so gradual a manner, as to elude observation ; while no reasonable doubt can be entertained as to its reality. Where the external conduct previously is blameless, the effect of the renewal of the Holy Ghost on the heart is not so readily discerned.

There are, however, many cases in every age in which the power of Divine influence is clearly marked ; and which it is not possible to account for by ascribing them to any other cause. When men of infidel opinions and unholy lives are constrained utterly to relinquish their views—cordially to embrace the truth—to turn from darkness unto light, and from the power of sin unto God ; when they continue to adorn the gospel by a pure and consistent character ; who can doubt that the heart has been made good, or, that they have experienced the mighty change, styled in scripture regeneration ? Without noticing the individuals in modern times of this description, the names of many of whom are known to all, I may mention St. Augustine, who was a distinguished Christian bishop in the fourth century. Notwithstanding the entreaties and admonitions of a pious mother, he was addicted in his youth to vice. “ For the space of nine years,” says he himself, “ from the nineteenth to the twenty-eighth year of my age, I lived deceived and deceiving others ; seducing men into various lusts, openly by what are called the liberal arts, and secretly by a false religion ; in the former, proud ; in the latter, superstitious ; and, to complete the dismal picture, a slave to the lusts of the flesh.” This person was converted—became a sincere and humble follower of Christ—a bright ornament of the church, and an able and faithful minister of the gospel. In his deep repentance, he says, concerning himself, “ Terrified with my sins, and the weight of my misery, I was desponding ; but thou, heavenly Father, encouragest me, saying, Christ died. Well may my hope be strong through such an intercessor ; else, I should despair. I cast all my care on thee, Lord, that I may

live. 'He hath redeemed me with his blood, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.' " In this instance, the power of Divine grace in regenerating and sanctifying the nature of man, is most manifest.

It is also presented to our view in a striking light, in connexion with the progress of the gospel in heathen lands. In almost every instance in which the truth, as it is in Jesus, has been proclaimed in its simplicity to pagan and unbelieving nations, have there been some converted to the faith of Christ, who have attested the greatness and reality of the change wrought upon their hearts by the purity of their lives. In the islands of the South Sea, in particular, the triumphs of Christianity have been numerous and remarkable. A nation has been born at once. Multitudes have relinquished idolatry, as well as the impure and cruel rites to which they were addicted, and have become humble, self-denied, and devoted followers of the Redeemer. What other power than that of God could have produced this revolution, and have changed the moral waste over which spiritual death had sent a withering influence, into a fruitful field? The wilderness and the solitary place are made glad, and the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose. It blossoms abundantly, and rejoices even with joy and singing; the glory of Lebanon is given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God.*

Thus, the effects of which the gospel of Christ is productive, can only be accounted for by tracing them to that Divine agency to which the Scriptures teach us to ascribe them. "No man can come unto me except the Father who hath sent me draw him. Except a man be born of the Spirit, he cannot see the kingdom of God." In accordance with these declarations, all the spiritual light which men at any time possess is said to be given to them of God. "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so,

* Isaiah, xxxv.

Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father : and no man knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." * Here the doctrine of Divine illumination as necessary to right apprehensions of God and of his will, and, consequently, to the exercise of that faith in Christ which is essential to life eternal, is plainly asserted.

II. This doctrine is most rational. If, indeed, it were maintained, that Divine influence operated on the human mind by sudden impressions altogether unconnected with the Scriptures, it might be difficult to reconcile it to reason. But effecting its designs, as it does by means of revealed truth, and leading to the very same results as that truth would of itself produce, but for the depravity of man, its necessity and reality are most accordant to the human understanding. For, while the light and power by which man becomes a new creature, are entirely and immediately from God, his own natural faculties are exercised in their reception. The light of the Spirit is the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, which must shine into his heart before he has a sense of its excellency.

Is it not reasonable to suppose, then, that there is such a transcendent beauty and glory in Divine things, as cannot be discerned by man without the teaching of the Holy Spirit. If the glory of God be that which is seen in the person and work of Christ, might we not infer, that a subject of such infinite excellency can only be rightly perceived by the light of heaven ? Nor can it be deemed inconsistent with any dictate of reason to maintain, that the gracious and almighty God, who originally made man in his own image, should, now that this image is lost, restore it by his own immediate operation. The image of God, we are assured, consists in knowledge, as well as in true holiness ; knowledge of the glorious excellencies of the things of the Spirit, and holiness, or a right disposition or frame of heart in regard to these things ; and by whom can these be communi-

* Luke, x. 21, 22.

cated, but by the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift ?

Besides, there is produced in regeneration a change of heart, a relish for spiritual good. Without this relish there can be no real holiness, no fitness for the kingdom of God. But this cannot possibly originate with man himself, because, as a sinner, he is unable to turn himself from sin unto holiness. It is the dictate of reason as well as of Scripture, that the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, and the leopard his spots, as they do good who are accustomed to do evil. Who can work this mighty change but God, whose Holy Spirit creates anew in Christ Jesus ? Unless it is accomplished by Him, how hopeless is the condition of man !

When I affirm, that the doctrine of supernatural influence in the regeneration and sanctification of man is most rational, I am not to be understood as insinuating that we are capable of understanding the mode of the Spirit's operation on the human mind. That is a subject very far above the reach of our comprehension. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth ; so is every one that is born of the Spirit." * The fact is incontrovertible, but the manner in which it is accomplished is inexplicable. It is no more on this account at variance with reason, than are the most common phenomena of nature, which we are unable satisfactorily to account for. Is it surprising that we are incapable of understanding the way in which God renovates the powers of our fallen nature, when we cannot comprehend the mode in which he has given being to a particle of dust, or, in which he makes a single blade of grass to grow ?

III. The doctrine of Divine influence in the conversion and sanctification of man, is most encouraging. It has been sometimes represented in a very opposite light, as calculated to produce indolence, if not despondency. It is alleged, that, if the regeneration of man be solely of God, he can himself be in no way instrumental in the accomplishment of this change ; that he is patiently to

* John, iii. 8.

wait till he is operated upon by power from on high. Those who make this allegation maintain, that the doctrine in question has a depressing effect on the mind, as implying an extreme degree of depravity and helplessness in human nature, in consequence of which man has no power to exert in his own recovery.

The representation of Scripture of this subject, on the contrary, bears a most cheering aspect. If the fact be, as we have substantial evidence for believing, that man is in all his powers depraved, that his understanding in regard to all real knowledge of God is darkened, that his heart is dead to spiritual emotion, how pleasing is the consideration, that a holy and omnipotent power is engaged to work in him that which he is unable to accomplish himself. As an atonement of infinite efficacy is provided, on which he may rest for pardon and acceptance, so the Holy Spirit is promised through the Saviour to all that ask him, to give them victory over the dominion and the love of sin, and to form them his own workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. This blessing is so far from rendering diligence in the use of means unnecessary, that it is a most powerful incentive to persevering exertion and prayer. It is in this light that our Lord exhibits it; while he encourages all to look for its reception by continued supplication to God. If earthly parents, when solicited by their children, will not hold from them necessary food, will the God of boundless compassion refuse to listen to the cry of distress, sent to his throne by the souls which he has made, when petitioning for that which he has graciously promised to bestow? "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened; or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give good things, or the Holy Spirit, to them that ask him?" *

* Luke, xi. 9—14.

Divine influence works on the human mind in regeneration and sanctification, in entire accordance with the faculties and affections of man as an intelligent and accountable being. It is not to be regarded as a superior power applied to his nature which compels him to act in opposition to his own volitions, but as a renovation of his faculties, in consequence of which he is willing to love and obey God. The Holy Spirit in this work, draws with the cords of a man; that is, as the expression plainly implies, he acts upon the minds of men in a way suitable to their capacity and power, through an inward and immediate influence. There is no compulsion, therefore, offered to the will, by which they are forced to believe and to be saved whether they will or no. This were altogether impossible, since it would totally destroy their moral agency, and reduce them into the rank of mere machines. The Divine and efficacious influence works so completely in and by their own natural actings that the regenerate seldom know the time of their regeneration; and in many cases they find it difficult to determine with full certainty even during a course of years, whether they are really born again. This accords with every representation of Scripture of the manner in which God renews and sanctifies his people. "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them. I will give them a heart to know me that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; so they shall return unto me with their whole heart."—Ezek. xxxvi. 25—30.

The view given in these passages of what God has promised to do in his people, holds out the greatest encouragement to man. It does not set aside his own diligence and exertions as unnecessary, but tells him of the holy and almighty power by which the insensibility and enmity of his heart in regard to God and spiritual things shall be removed: and thus presents to him the strongest motives to activity, prayer, and continued con-

cern for his immortal interests. He is commanded to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling, animated and awed by the consideration that it is God who worketh in him, both to will and to do of his good pleasure. The righteousness by which he is justified is wholly wrought out for him, and is freely imputed to him when he believes on Christ. Through the mediation of the Redeemer a complete salvation is provided; and all are invited to partake of its blessings: but they are to labour with diligence and perseverance even to the end of life, to be delivered from sin and its consequences, and to be enabled to enjoy the favour, and to do the will of God. They are to strive to enter in at the strait gate; to run the race which is set before them; to resist the enemies of their souls; to fight the good fight of faith; to persevere in the use of all scriptural means for making their calling and election sure; and to shew this diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. How consoling and animating is it for them to know, that in the discharge of these duties it is God himself who works in them, who communicates the willingness to repent, to believe and to obey, which they feel; and who enables them in some happy measure to act agreeably to the desires which he has produced. Nor are the Divine assistance and operation given casually, but according to an eternal purpose revealed in the gospel; and on their bestowment, therefore, when sought with sincerity and prayer, we may most confidently rely. He who has fixed it as the unchanging statute of heaven, that Divine influence shall be given to fallen men in the way which he himself has pointed out in his word, and who has commanded them to ask it in this way, communicates, to all who really comply with the injunction, liberally.

The encouragement presented to all by this consideration is unspeakably great; since their depravity and helplessness cannot be more desperate than the power and compassion of God are able to remove. None are tempted to conceal from themselves the difficulties that exist to their salvation, arising from their spiritual blindness, the natural estrangement of their thoughts and

affections from God, and the extreme hardness and wickedness of their hearts. For while all might with good reason despond, were they required to contend with these difficulties in their own strength ; what are they before His victorious grace, who works in all who really desire it both to will and to do ; who makes his people willing in the day of his power ? Does not He give them the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ ? Does not he quicken them, though dead in trespasses and in sins, and implant in their hearts the principle of eternal life ? Does not he subdue their enmity, and fill them with peace, joy, delight, and complacency in himself ? His word declares, and his procedure verifies the declaration, that the dead are made to hear the voice of the Son of God, and that they who hear, live ; * that the most obdurate sinner may have his heart so changed as to love the Lord God ; and that none who truly ask from Him to be delivered from the dominion of sin shall in regard to this seek his face in vain.

IV. The tendency and design of the doctrine of Divine influence is holy. This is so obvious, as to require little elucidation. For, if holiness consist, as it certainly does, in realising in our nature the gospel of Christ, in having it written in our hearts, and impressed upon our lives, the promise of Divine influence to effect this is of course holy in its tendency.

It is, indeed, calculated to humble man, by shewing him the complete depravity of his nature, and his absolute dependence upon God for its renewal. It teaches him a lesson which, however reluctant he is to learn, must be acquired before the work of sanctification can be begun, namely, that he is in himself poor, and miserable, blind and naked ; that he has destroyed himself ; that he is undone ; and that he is to look to God alone for help. But while it humbles man, it exalts the grace and compassion of God, in providing for him a salvation in every way complete ; a salvation from the guilt, power, pollution, and consequences of sin ; which is not only

* John, v. 25.

freely offered, but pressed upon the acceptance of every creature.

The very design for which Divine influence is communicated to man, is to make him holy; to deliver him from all iniquity, and to impress upon his nature the image of God. The operations of the Holy Spirit in regeneration and sanctification tend to these as their final results. His whole work, therefore, is described as a glorifying of Christ, a reproof of the world of their sin and folly in rejecting him, and turning them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. This invaluable gift is bestowed, not to encourage indolence, or a neglect of duty, but to incline and enable us diligently to mortify sin, and run in the way of God's commandments.

Hence the beautiful description of conversion and its immediate effects: a description which represents purity as inseparably connected with the operation of the Spirit of God. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power. In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth."* Wherever the people are made willing to bow to the Redeemer's sceptre, the fruits of righteousness are brought forth, the practice of sin is relinquished, and the excellencies of holiness are exhibited. Nor will the good work of renovation commenced, however small in its beginning, be finally abandoned: its ultimate design is the perfection of the whole man in conformity to the image of God; and this glorious purpose shall be accomplished by Him who has chosen his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. They are, therefore, required habitually to remember that their body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in them, which they have of God; and that the end of the indwelling of this Divine Person is to give them the will and the ability to glorify God in their bodies and in their spirits which are God's. By him they are strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and

* Psalm cx. 3.

long-suffering with joyfulness, and are made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This leads me to observe—

V. That the scripture doctrine of Divine influence in the conversion and sanctification of man accords with the representations of the glory and happiness to which he is to be exalted through the mediation of the Redeemer. We are not surprised that extraordinary effects should result from the death of Christ: on the contrary we naturally think, that the cause will be more wonderful than the consequences that can proceed from it. We see a suitableness and propriety in conferring on this Divine Being, in consideration of his voluntary abasement and suffering, all the honour of universal dominion and sovereignty; and that the Holy Spirit should be given in attestation of the value of his oblation, as a proof of his ascension to the right hand of Majesty on high, and his being constituted the only medium through whom all communication between heaven and earth is to pass.

But ought we not also to infer, that effects of infinite value are to follow from the Spirit's dwelling with man? It is, indeed, wonderful that He should come down to this world of sin and death, and communicate life and holiness. His gracious interposition affords a pledge that it is for the accomplishment of designs of inconceivable magnitude and importance. The regeneration and sanctification of one soul are inseparably connected with the enjoyment of great and immortal good; but he is to prepare many myriads for this enduring felicity in the kingdom of God. How excellent and glorious must be the inheritance in reserve for them, when in order to make them meet for it, they are born of God, created anew by the operation of God the Holy Spirit! How exalted are the glory and happiness which they are destined to possess hereafter, when they are now distinguished by a new nature—by the indwelling of that Divine Person who shall abide with them for ever. They are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. The rank to which they are thus raised, infinitely surpasses their own con-

ceptions, and will only be really known and appreciated when the Judge of all shall distinguish them as the adopted children of God, and welcome them as such into the kingdom prepared for them before the foundation of the world. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ. Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." *

The agency by which the power and pollution of sin are removed from our nature is as truly wonderful, as that by which its guilt has been expiated. As in the one case, so in the other, a Divine person appears to accomplish a work which no inferior agent could perform. If there be infinite condescension in the Son of God's assuming human nature, in his enduring the reproaches and contradiction of sinners, and in his humbling himself to the death of the Cross, there is also the greatest kindness in the third person of the glorious Trinity, undertaking to renovate and prepare innumerable myriads for the possession of the new heaven and the new earth, in which righteousness shall be an everlasting inhabitant. From an interposition so extraordinary, are we not warranted to anticipate the most surprising and glorious results? If the work of human redemption has been executed by God, and immediately applied and consummated by God, we cannot wonder that effects of boundless extent and duration should flow from it; or, that the redeemed should hereafter be raised to so elevated and conspicuous a place in the universe.

VI. The doctrine of the necessity of Divine influence to the conversion of the sinner is perfectly consistent with man's free agency and responsibility. It is so, because it is certain that man is justly responsible for his conduct, though it is not less certain that he will never repent or turn unto God without Divine influence. This Divine influence is graciously communicated to man, not because he wants the powers of a free and

* Romans, viii. 16; 1 John, iii. 1, 2.

accountable agent, and not because he is under no obligation to love and obey God;—but in consequence of his indisposition to do what God commands. In the means which God employs for the conversion of man, he addresses him, and deals with him, as a free and responsible agent; who is capable of knowing the will of God, and who possesses all the natural powers necessary to a compliance with it. Hence the duty of ministers to urge the obligation of immediate repentance and turning unto God; of warning, persuading, and exhorting every man to flee to the refuge presented in the gospel. Hence, also, the duty of all to whom the gospel is addressed, to comply without delay with its invitation of mercy, to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to the saving of their souls. Their impenitence is inexcusable; since no reason can be given for its existence or continuance, but their unwillingness and indisposition.

It is unnecessary to enter on any metaphysical proof of this position: for it is demonstrated by every part of the Divine procedure towards man:—by the threatenings, promises, and expostulations of God's word;—by the consequences which he has connected with disobedience to the gospel;—and by prescribing to him means of grace and salvation to observe. I may also add, that the obligation of man to obey the law of God, and, consequently, to comply with the call of the gospel, is attested by his own conscience.

VII. The influence of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and sanctification of man is silent in its operation. I mean by this remark, that it comes not with observation; and that it often is unnoticed, in its beginning, even by those who are the subjects of it. "I taught Ephraim to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," Hosea ii. 3, 4. "He deals so with those who are born of him, as even to teach them to go, and they know not that it is he that carries them along. The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of nature, it is, in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up to the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to

every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we do not see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons, who have been consumed, and even next to death in a putrid and corrupt air; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome, they revive, but in a very insensible way; so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence, which is as pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign and cherishing air; they live by it. What a wonderful mercy is it that the Spirit should ever thus come down among men, upon such a design; and diffuse life and vital influence in a world lost in spiritual death!" *

* Howe on the Work of the Spirit.

CHAPTER XII.

DIVINE TRUTH THE ORDINARY MEANS OF ITS
PRODUCTION.

THE gospel is the divinely appointed means of changing the human mind, and of turning man to God. It is the voice of the Son of God, addressed to the spiritually dead, which they are to hear and understand, and through which they are to obtain life. It is the rod of the Redeemer's strength, which he has sent forth, fitted by infinite wisdom to impress the heart, and to induce men to become his willing subjects. It contains those weapons which are mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. It is the instrument which infinite wisdom framed and designed for the regeneration of the world; by which apostles successfully assailed the systems of impurity and superstition which had universally enslaved and degraded the nature of man; by which those servants of the Most High God conveyed light, and holiness, and happiness to so large a portion of the human race. It cannot but be interesting and profitable to inquire into the properties of that Divine Word which God has appointed to be the means of conversion and salvation.

In producing these important effects,—the gospel operates upon our nature according to the established laws of our mental constitution. By this constitution we are capable of anticipating the future, and of being concerned about our happiness or misery. When we extend our views to the future we cannot be indifferent whether we are to experience good or evil, whether we are to live in the enjoyment of pleasure, or in the suffering of pain. But the discoveries of the gospel relate to man personally, and to his everlasting

happiness or misery. The belief of them, therefore, is calculated deeply to affect him, to awaken him to a just consideration of the circumstances in which he is placed, and to lead him, by looking at things unseen and eternal, to pursue that course which will issue in endless felicity. This is the direct tendency of Divine revelation ; and these effects it is calculated to produce, both by its own nature, and by the laws of our constitution. On this subject I remark,—

I. That the gospel is the usual and appointed means of man's conversion. By the gospel I mean the whole of Divine revelation, comprehending its representations of the character of God, of his moral government, of the condition and accountableness of man, and the way of recovery through the substitution and death of the Redeemer. The whole of this is truth without any mixture of error ; truth in which man is personally and deeply concerned ; and it is by means of this truth, through the inward influence of the Spirit, that God is pleased to enlighten and regenerate the mind of man. It is this, generally and comprehensively, which is termed "the law of the Lord:" and this law "is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple: the statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes."

The law, properly so called, is calculated to convince of sin, and is usually the means of producing conviction. It is a discovery of the righteousness of God, the expression of his infinite purity, the announcement of his will, and of the relation in which he stands to man as his Moral Governor. The view which it furnishes of the character of God, in as far as it extends, is just: but it shuts him up to the contemplation of his holiness and righteousness; and presents no method of escape from the condemnation which its transgression involves. It makes known the authority of God, and the obligation of man; and in common with the works of nature and of providence, it proclaims the supremacy and benevolence of God. But it is the disclosures of mercy that are peculiarly calculated to conciliate the affections, and en-

gage the love and confidence of man. These are, from their nature, glad tidings of great joy unto all people; as they make known, not merely the goodness of God, but that he has formed a plan of redeeming mercy in regard to mankind; and that he is now in Christ Jesus reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. The gospel is pre-eminently the means of man's conversion; and is characterised as the power of God, and the wisdom of God unto salvation.

II. The gospel, as an instrument, is most skilfully adapted to its end. It is framed by infinite wisdom for affecting the heart of man, for enlightening his understanding, and purifying his affections, and for bringing him to love and obey his Creator; and it is admirably adapted to the attainment of these ends. The discovery which it gives of the love of God is as peculiar as it is deeply affecting. While the benevolence of the Great Author of nature is revealed through all his works, the manifestation is obscure in comparison of that great love which is shown in human redemption. But for our familiarity with the mysterious fact, we could never hear without astonishment, that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life."* Here is a fact which exhibits the character of God in a new and engaging light, and which diffuses the brightest glory around his attributes. All this love, he, who is the offended party—he, whose laws and authority had been dishonoured, has shown us most freely, without our importunity or solicitation. The gospel is the expression of this love, the announcement of what it has done for us, the invitation of God, urging our acceptance of the proffered gift, and commanding us to be reconciled to him, because all things are ready. Can the heart of man resist this overcoming tenderness, or hold out in its apathy and alienation against the influence of love such as this? Is there not in this discovery of the gracious character of God, an aptitude to conciliate affection, a power that might remove the fears of the deepest

* John, iii. 16.

guilt, and that might conquer and win every rebellious heart?

This revelation of mercy is a provision for the wants of man—for wants which he painfully feels, and which otherwise must remain unsupplied. It proclaims relief from all the guilt under which he lies—from the bondage of sin and Satan—from the fear of death—and from all the future consequences of transgression. It approves itself to his understanding and his heart as worthy of his most cordial acceptance, as containing the remedy which he needs to restore him to the true dignity and happiness of his nature. It presents to him a state of unmingled and endless glory, which all they shall enjoy who are now renovated and purified by the faith of the gospel. How criminal, then, must be even indifference to means framed by infinite wisdom, and so Divinely adapted to the salvation of man? But the guilt must be inconceivably great, of resisting that Word which is quick and powerful, and of counteracting all the impressions which it is calculated to make on the heart. For this word not only makes known the will of God, but the will of God in regard to our salvation. It, indeed, unfolds the misery which sin has produced; it removes the disguise under which man would conceal from himself as well as from others, his spiritual deformity; shows him his inward impurity, the seeds of evil that lurk unsuspected in his heart, his consequent loathsomeness in the eyes of his Maker, and his exposure to condemnation. But it proclaims peace from God through his Son, confirmed by the blood of the cross; and exhibits a sure and immoveable foundation, on which to rest his hopes of acceptance. It gives him that salvation which he requires to relieve him from guilt, and to restore him to perfect purity. The gospel, we say, therefore, is most skilfully adapted to attain the end for which it is designed.

III. The gospel, viewed as the appointed means of man's conversion, must be used and applied before it can be effectual. It is folly to propose the attainment of an end, without the use of the legitimate means. The husbandman will look in vain for a harvest, unless he prepares

the ground and sows the seed. It is not less obvious that the gospel is successful as an instrument only where it is known, understood, received, and believed.

It is necessary that it should be known. "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?" It is almost self-evident, that whatever purposes the gospel proposes to attain in regard to the salvation of man, can only be accomplished when it comes into contact with his understanding and heart. What God may do without the instrumentality of means it is not for us to determine. But we know from himself the character of importance which he has attached to his word; and that it only reveals the way of salvation --the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. Had he designed the removal of human guilt, and the restoration of mankind to future happiness, without any regard to their views and feelings while on earth on these subjects, his design might be effected though they remained, during their mortal course, in entire ignorance of it. But so far is this idea from receiving countenance in the scriptures, that the contrary is uniformly affirmed. They constantly teach, that the salvation of the gospel respects character as well as condition--that the connexion between these is so inseparable that the one must be changed consentaneously with the other;--and that this change essential to his safety can only take place in consistency with the principles of his nature as an intelligent and accountable being. But in order to influence the understanding and the will of a being thus constituted, the discoveries, offers, and demands of the gospel, must be placed before him, and made the subject of reflection and consideration. How can he believe that truth which is the divinely appointed means of sanctification until it is made known to him; or, how can he give the love and confidence of his heart to a Saviour of whom he has not heard? How can he have that faith in his obedience and death without which there is no salvation, or acquire that meetness for heaven by obeying the truth, without which heaven cannot be enjoyed?

The number and variety of the means which have been employed to authenticate and promulgate Divine revelation, tend to prove its indispensable necessity to the salvation of man. To attest this heavenly record, miracles were wrought, holy men were inspired to utter a series of predictions which have been fulfilled, and which are fulfilling to the end of time. To preserve it free from every mixture of error, a people were selected and kept separate from the rest of mankind during many ages. One of the last and great commandments which the Saviour gave to his disciples was, to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature,* proclaiming repentance and remission of sins in his name among all nations; a command which could not be carried into effect without much labour and suffering—and which obviously implied the infinite importance of the message to be communicated to the safety and happiness of man. Its importance in this view was felt by the servants of the Most High God, who zealously carried the gospel throughout the world, suffered the loss of all things in executing their commission, and in the end sealed their testimony with their blood. They did all this that they might testify the gospel of the grace of God,—because they believed, that without this Divine knowledge the people perish, and that it only points out to man the path of life.

Further: it is necessary that the truth of the gospel should be seriously considered, in order to its becoming effectual unto salvation. By a law of our constitution, we can derive benefit only from that which is made the subject of our attention and reflection. An object presented to the mind will have an influence upon it in proportion to the intensity with which it is contemplated. On this principle, a truth of infinite importance may have little effect; while the illusions and trifles of a moment may work upon us as great realities. The prevailing state of the mind, therefore, will accord with the topics on which a man habitually fixes his thoughts. The miser gives his chief attention to his wealth, the man of science

* Mark, xvi. 15. 16.

to the pursuits of knowledge, the Christian to spiritual things. While the great themes of the gospel are not brought in contact, as it were, with the mind—while they are unheeded, or not contemplated with any degree of attention corresponding to their Divine excellency, it were vain to expect that their sanctifying influence should be experienced. While men count the great things of God's law as strange things, they cannot be profited by them. The saying is founded in truth, that the want of consideration is the cause of the loss of many souls.

The gospel, before it becomes effectual to salvation, must be deeply pondered. The end for which it is communicated is, that the glorious plan which it develops may be attentively studied and comprehended; and that those to whom it is addressed may avail themselves of its rich provisions, act in accordance with its directions, and entirely yield themselves to its authority and influence. It is only when we study the import of the message of salvation with humility, with prayer, with diligence, and with sincere resolution to conform our dispositions and our lives to its requirements, that we have any warrant to expect the experience of its renovating and sanctifying effects. We may thus hope to be delivered from those errors which affect the foundation of Christianity, and which subvert the foundation of man's acceptance. Cherishing such a spirit, and acting on such principles, we have good ground to believe, that we shall know the truth, and that the truth shall make us free; that we shall feel its power, understand its design, embrace its promises, and be made meet for enjoying its rewards.

In nearly all God's dealings with men, he has united their diligence in the use of appointed means, and his grace together. How often, in his word, does he stir up their zeal and activity by the promise of Divine assistance? "Be strong, and of good courage, and do it; for the Lord God, even my God, will be with thee, and will not fail thee, nor forsake thee, until thou hast finished all the work. Turn ye at my reproof; and I will pour my Spirit upon you. Work out your own salvation, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do." This connexion between the means and the end is obviously

founded in Divine wisdom ; and he who does not observe it, has no reason to expect that the gospel of the grace of God will be of avail to the renovation and purification of his heart. If the blind man had not obeyed the command of Christ, and washed himself in the pool of Siloam, would he have received his sight ? If the man with the withered hand had not stretched it forth, when desired to do so, would it have been restored to vigour and usefulness ? In like manner, if sinful men imagine that Divine truth will operate on them as a charm, without its being understood, and seriously and diligently reflected on ; or, suppose that its gracious designs will ultimately be accomplished in them, though they treat it with indifference and neglect, they will find themselves disappointed.

Nor will it avail to object, that men, even by the use of appointed means, cannot regenerate themselves. To such an objection, it is sufficient answer that God has commanded the diligent use of these means, and that he has promised his special blessing in the persevering and prayerful use of them. Besides, God deals with men as intelligent beings, who are supposed to be concerned, and who ought to feel concerned, for their eternal welfare. They are capable of reflecting on the character of God, the extent of their obligations, the evil of sin, the guilt and peril which it involves, the uncertainty of life, and the nearness and awfulness of an eternal and unchangeable state. These themes they are capable of meditating on till their hearts are deeply affected, till they humbly fall down in the presence of God, acknowledging their guilt and pollution, and entrusting themselves and their cause to the all-sufficient Redeemer. Are they not able also to send up the expression of their wants to that God who is the hearer of prayer, and who will not withhold healing and sanctifying influences from those who earnestly and perseveringly ask them ?

Again : Divine truth in order to its becoming effectual to salvation, must be cordially received. The character of its Author, and its own inherent excellency and importance, entitle it to this. Nor, as an appointed means, can it attain its end, though it be known and compre-

hended, unless we take a lively and personal interest in it, and submit our understandings and our hearts to its authority. Like that Redeemer whom it reveals, it is worthy of all acceptance; and until we treat it according to its claims, and cherish it as the message of eternal life, how can we expect that the peace which it offers, the holiness which it produces, and the happy immortality which it presents, will be ours? "For this cause also thank we God," says the apostle, respecting the Thessalonians, "because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe." * The cordial reception of Divine truth is the opening of the heart to its holy influence; and it is to allow us a means of grace to produce those effects, for which it has been appointed.

IV. The gospel is an instrument which God has greatly blessed for the conversion of men; and which, as the means of regeneration, he will continue to own till the end of time. This consideration is calculated to rouse us to diligence in the use of means which we know have been extensively efficacious since they were first instituted, and which so many have found to be the power of God and the wisdom of God unto salvation. From the first announcement of the word of God in the form of a promise, until the present day, has it been productive of the illumination and sanctification of multitudes. It has proved itself to be "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart." † In comparison of this, how weak and powerless has been the wisdom of the wise, and all the means devised by the ingenuity of man for the melioration of human character. The gospel has been instrumental in effectually changing the principles of men of all ranks and nations;—in rendering the rapacious charitable; the polluted, holy; the proud and self-

* 1 Thes. ii. 13.

† Heb. iv. 12.

sufficient, humble ; the active slaves of sin and Satan, the voluntary agents in promoting the glory of God. Its power has been felt in all the varied circumstances of life, in enlightening, regulating, and purifying, the mind of man ; and it is to be productive of these effects till the end of time.

It is the perpetuity of this means of renovating the human character, no less than its excellency, that claims our attention. It is destined to be the instrument of life and happiness to multitudes of mankind in every age till the end of the world. By this Divine revelation of himself, God is to make manifest the savour of his knowledge in every place ;—to enlighten the millions who are now enveloped in the darkness of spiritual death ;—to subvert every system of idolatry and superstition, by which the human mind is debased ;—and to elevate and bless the family of man. We have all the certainty that can arise from the promises of God that his word shall mightily and universally prevail ; and that the gracious purposes for which it has been given and continued in the world shall surely be accomplished. If the earth is to be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, the prediction is to be fulfilled by the diffusion of the word of God.

In the permanency of this means of renovation we have a most powerful incentive to diligence in its use. That which has been instrumental in the conversion of many myriads, may be made effectual to ours. If others have found this to be the power of God unto salvation, why may not we experience the same effects ? We have here also a criterion by which to ascertain the reality of this change. Do our views, feelings, and principles, correspond with the statements and requirements of the Divine word ? Whatever may have been the means of awakening our attention, is it the gospel that gives us relief, is it in the Saviour alone that we trust ? In regard to its invitations to come to Christ,—have we complied with them : and its offers of mercy,—have we received them : and its commands and requirements,—do we obey them ? In this way of self-examination many persons know whether they have been born again by the

incorruptible seed of the Word, which liveth and abideth for ever. I observe—

V. That while the gospel is the Divinely instituted means of regeneration, it is nothing more than means. “Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.”* The beginning, progress, and consummation of the work of grace, are ascribed to God. “Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Christ.”† It is of importance to the convinced and awakened to remember, that while they are diligently using the means of grace, and especially attending to the gospel of salvation, they may confidently expect the power of Him who can render his own means effectual to salvation. If it be the privilege of the husbandman to sow in hope, it is the duty of the penitent to expect the life-giving influence of the Holy Spirit. The Lord is ever present with his own word; and to every one who humbly and supplicantly asks the power of his grace to make it the means of enlightening and renovating, will he give his enriching blessing. Every such person may rest on the fulfilment of the promise, and may plead it in prayer to God: “For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.”‡

Hence the encouragement to all to observe diligently and perseveringly the means of grace. In this way God is to be waited on, and the blessings of his salvation are found. Hence, also, the important duty incumbent upon all to attend, with prayerful hearts, to the reading and preaching of the word. This is emphatically denominated the word of salvation, the gospel of salvation. When, or where, have sinners been converted and sanctified without this Divine word? When have men been

* 1 Cor. iii. 7.

† Phil. i. 6.

‡ Isaiah, lv. 10, 11.

convinced of sin, humbled before their Maker, animated with zeal for his honour, and reverence for his law, and from heavenly principles, led to the practice of all holy obedience, where the gospel has not been known? It is this alone which discloses the love of God to man, the wondrous method of human redemption, the character, work, offices, power, and compassion of the Saviour. Here alone men learn what is the way of acceptance, the remedy which God has provided, the only name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved. It is here that God tells to all those words, which, if they attend to them, and obey them, will lead them to eternal life.

From the view thus given of the means which God has appointed for the conversion and sanctification of man, it follows, in the first place, that all excitement which has not Divine Truth for its moving and sustaining power, is to be carefully distinguished from religious affection. There may often be circumstances associated with religion which attract the attention and affect the minds of men, and which may produce intense feeling. When this feeling is awakened, by whatever means, the mere love of excitement will lead many to wish for a continuance of the circumstances by which it is produced. Some good men, inconsiderately, may be disposed to regard the deep and, perhaps, joyful feelings about religion, as religious. It is, therefore, of importance habitually to recollect that feeling is in no case of this sacred character, unless called into existence, and regulated in its power, by the manifestation of the truth of God contained in the scriptures. We are thus furnished with a safeguard against enthusiasm and superstition.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SCRIPTURAL SIGNS AND EVIDENCES OF THE
INTERNAL CALL OF EFFECTUAL GRACE,
OR REGENERATION.

IF the change produced by supernatural influence in regeneration be of that extraordinary description which scripture represents, and which the nature of the case implies, we may suppose that its existence will be indicated by unequivocal proofs. Can the transition be made from darkness into marvellous light without its being perceived? Can new affections be brought into operation, while the mind in which they are exercised remains unconscious of their existence? May we not clearly ascertain their reality by their effects? "Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so, every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit."

Though the marks of a regenerate state, the signs of true conversion to God, be set forth with precision and fulness in scripture, individuals may, from obvious causes, experience difficulty in applying them to themselves. Irrespectively of the circumstance that the Holy Spirit operates in and by the natural actings of the human mind, and that, on this account, the particular time in which he exerts his power in the production of a saving change is less observable, the apparent resemblance between real and supposed evidences of regeneration, the distrust with which persons of tender consciences come to a conclusion in regard to their absolute safety, in consequence of their anxious solicitude to avoid a mistake where it may be followed by irretrievable results, the difference in constitutional temperament

and character which gives rise to a corresponding difference in the turn of thinking, and tone of feeling, the consciousness of much corruption suggesting doubts of the reality of conversion, and the recollection that many in every age have deceived themselves and others;—render much consideration and self-examination necessary in coming to a decision with respect to our actual salvation.

Yet it will be admitted by all that a right decision on this point is most important and desirable. Such decision, however, is not to be attained without correct knowledge of those scriptural marks by which regeneration is accompanied and followed. With these it is necessary to be familiar in order to be able readily to distinguish them from counterfeits, and also to perceive their existence even when exhibited, as they always are in the living character, in combination with imperfection and infirmity. Nor is there any duty in which the obligation of prayer for the Divine direction and assistance is more imperious, than in conducting self-examination with the solemnity and impartiality requisite to render it profitable. Hence the Psalmist, after having set forth the omniscience of God, invokes his aid in enabling him to detect error and deception in regard to his personal salvation. “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

I can only mention a few of the leading evidences of a new nature; and shall notice these in contrast with what may be termed, on account of their resemblance, counterfeits.

I. Spiritual views of the excellency of Divine things in contradistinction to mere speculative knowledge. It is possible to acquire by the diligent exercise of the natural faculties of the human mind an acquaintance with all the truths and facts of scripture. The doctrines of the gospel may be understood, and systematically arranged, while their renovating and sanctifying power is not felt. The fallen angels, whose abilities are so much greater than those of man, and who possessed su-

perior opportunities of being informed concerning the character, attributes, and government of God, must far surpass the best instructed of mankind with respect to speculative knowledge. They have been spectators of the procedure of God in regard to this world from the time in which its foundations were laid;—they have attentively observed all his dispensations, and more particularly the progressive discovery of the plan of redeeming mercy;—and their malignant and incessant effort to prevent that Divine revelation which he has given, from having its influence on those to whom it is addressed, has led them to be familiar with its import. In the same way persons who enjoy in rich abundance the means of religious knowledge, may attain to clear notions of the attributes of God, of the nature of the covenants, of the economy of redemption, of the person and offices of Christ, and of the way of salvation through him; they may be capable of forcibly and eloquently stating and defending these and the other doctrines of the gospel, and yet exhibit no certain evidence of being regenerated. The system of Divine truth is studied like any other system; and of course the relations of its parts, as well as the scope and design of the whole, are clearly comprehended; while there is no sense or perception of its infinite excellency and glory.

It is this sense, or perception of the loveliness and excellency of Divine things, that distinguishes spiritual or saving knowledge from that which is merely speculative. It is often referred to in scripture as inseparably connected with salvation; and, consequently, as an unequivocal sign of regeneration. “This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.—No man knoweth the Son, but the Father: neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.—The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”* This knowledge is immediately

* John, xvii. 3; Luke, x. 22; 1 Cor. ii. 14.

productive of humility and self-abasement, is operative and experimental; and is on this account spoken of in scripture as if it were equal in certainty to that which we acquire by our bodily senses. Hence real believers are said to taste that the Lord is gracious,—to have seen, looked upon, and handled the word of life;—and to have such a view of the great and glorious object of Divine knowledge as to be gradually assimilated into the same likeness.*

The peculiar characteristic of this knowledge is, that it is the effect of a relish for Divine things, as in themselves infinitely excellent, and accordant with the taste of the mind. It is such a heartfelt sense of the beauty of the Lord as leads those who possess it to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. They not only believe that the character of God, the offices of the Redeemer, and the blessings he bestows, are unspeakably glorious and delightful, but they have an abiding sense of this on their hearts, in consequence of which they have an immediate and powerful perception of their transcendent loveliness. Hence prejudice and enmity against the truth are subdued; affection to Divine things springs up; and they are seen and realised with minds embued with the love of holiness. The effect of this heavenly illumination, even when there is no change in the articles of their creed, is similar to what is experienced by a person who issues from a state of darkness into the light of noonday, and who has certain knowledge of the objects which surround him. “Old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

II. Another evidence of a regenerate state is, a cordial and entire reliance upon Christ for salvation in contradistinction to mere assent to the gospel. That mere assent to the truth of all the doctrines of scripture is no certain proof of conversion to God, and consequently is no infallible sign of safety for eternity, is abundantly evident. Persons may believe in the being and attributes of God, in the existence of his moral government, in all

* 1 Pet. ii. 1, 2; 1 John, i. 1; 2 Cor. iii. 18.

the events recorded in Divine revelation, and in the truth of the promises and threatenings which it contains, and at the same time be destitute of that faith with which salvation is inseparably connected. Hence, the apostle James, addressing certain professing Christians says, "Thou believest that there is one God: thou dost well: the devils also believe and tremble." * So far as this goes, it is well: but the apostle denies, as is manifest from the scope of the passage, that it furnishes any evidence of a regenerate state. It is possessed by fallen angels, who are filled with all malice and wickedness; and therefore can be no sign of the renovation of the Holy Spirit. They have full conviction of the almighty power of God, for they have seen it displayed in the creation of the earth, the destruction of the whole world by a deluge, and all the mighty wonders by which the truth and Divine authority of the scriptures have been attested. They have no doubt of his infinite wisdom; for that is also exhibited to their view in the arrangements of Providence, in the work of redemption, and in confounding and frustrating their diabolical designs. They have, besides, a deep sense of his holiness and necessary opposition to sin; of his justice in inflicting punishment on sinners; and of his truth in fulfilling his word.

Nor is this all: they have firm belief in the realities of the invisible world; in all that Christ has done by his incarnation, sufferings, death, resurrection, and ascension to glory, for the salvation of his people; in the worth of immortal souls; and in the unspeakable importance of their redemption. They know with certainty that the enjoyments of the present state are vain and momentary, and that the concerns of eternity demand immediate and chief regard. Hence, the rich man is represented as requesting that Lazarus might be sent to his five brothers to testify unto them, lest they should come to the place of torment. † The inference from this is, if that this faith in God, in his character, in his moral and providential government, in the statements of

* James, ii. 19.

† Luke, xvi. 19—31.

Divine revelation, and in the realities of eternity, be compatible with final reprobation, it can furnish no certain evidence of regeneration.

This conclusion is still further established by the distinction so frequently alluded to in scripture, between a mere assent to the truth and a cordial acceptance of Christ. Men are said to believe, of whom it is at the same time affirmed, that they are destitute of saving faith. The Jews are represented by our Lord as trusting in Moses, that is, doubtless, as believing in the truth and Divine authority of the books written by Moses; and yet he tells them that if they had believed Moses they would have believed him; for he wrote of him. In like manner our Lord, addressing his professing disciples, said unto them, "There are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."* Here false disciples whose faith was temporary, and consisted in mere assent to the truth of the gospel, are said to be those that believed not. Of Simon Magus also, who is said to have believed, it is declared by the apostle Peter, that he had neither part nor lot in the matter of salvation; that his heart was not right in the sight of God; and that he was in the gall of bitterness, and bond of iniquity. His faith, therefore, whatever it may have been, was not saving; and could have furnished no real evidence of his safety, even though the apostle had made no such declaration as that which has been quoted.†

The faith which is a certain sign of a regenerate state, consists in a cordial reception of Christ in all his offices, and an entire reliance upon him alone for salvation. Hence it is described in Scripture as a receiving of Christ; as obeying the gospel—obeying from the heart the form of doctrine which is there delivered; as trust-

* John, vi. 64—67.

† In addition to the above cited passages, John, xii. 42.

ing in the Living God, and in his Son Jesus Christ ; as a committing of ourselves and our eternal well being to the Redeemer ; as a calling on the name of the Lord with a view to salvation ; as asking, seeking, knocking ; and as a fleeing for refuge to the hope set before us. It must, therefore, differ not in degree merely from that of fallen angels, and from the belief which in many instances is possessed by unrenewed men, but be in its nature and kind totally distinct. That it is so is manifest from the attributes which in scripture are ascribed to it ; from the things which are necessarily included in it ; and from its being sure evidence, wherever it is possessed, of regeneration.

With regard to the properties by which it is distinguished, one of the most prominent is, its supernatural origin. Concerning the faith of Simon Peter in Christ the Son of the Living God, Jesus said, "Blessed art thou Simon Barjona : for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." * To the same purpose our Lord has elsewhere said, "No man can come unto me except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him. It is written in the prophets, and they all shall be taught of God ; every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me." † Saving faith is ascribed in the most explicit terms to the operation of God,—to the same power by which man is made a new creature in Christ Jesus. "For by grace are ye saved, through faith ; and that not of yourselves ; it is the gift of God : not of works, lest any man should boast : for we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." ‡ Is not this faith holy in its nature, and consequently different in kind from that mere assent to the truth of the gospel which wicked men often give ?

That it is so, is farther evident from this, that it has its seat not merely in the understanding, but in the heart and the will. It is unnecessary to prove this formally, since it is clearly implied in the general language of

* Matth. xvi. 16. † John, vi. 42—45. ‡ Eph. ii. 8—10.

scripture in which it is described. Hence the impenitent are represented as receiving not the love of the truth that they might be saved;* a mode of expression of precisely similar import with, believing not the truth that they might be saved; and teaches that the faith to which salvation is connected springs directly from the heart as well as from the understanding. This is explicitly affirmed by the apostle when he says, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."† This belief of the gospel, this cordial reception of Christ, arising from the whole soul's being rightly affected towards him, is so entirely different in kind from anything to be found in the unregenerate, that they are declared to be wholly destitute of it. But this declaration could not be made with truth, if that mere assent to Christianity, which is so common, were the same in nature with genuine faith. In this case persons possessed of the former might be said to be weak in faith, but they could not be described as altogether void of it. Yet, all they to whom the gospel is hid, and who have no saving participation in its blessings, are said to *believe not*.

The position in question is also proved by a consideration of some of the things which are included in saving faith. One of these is a deep sense of unworthiness. For, though no qualification is requisite to render the sinner deserving of the Redeemer's favourable regard; and though none can be received by him, but as guilty and lost, it is certain that all who really come to him are previously convinced of sin, and of their exposure to wrath. Their sense of this is so deep, that it often leads them to question whether they will be received by the Saviour; in every case they feel their absolute need of him; and they heartily trust in him as the all-sufficient and compassionate Deliverer. It is only they who are awakened to feel their unworthiness, and their want of the pardon,

* 2 Thes. ii. 10.

† Rom. x. 5—10.

life, and holiness, which are freely offered in Christ, who hunger and thirst after righteousness, who cordially seek for salvation, who yield themselves to the Redeemer in his entire character and offices, who commit their all to his keeping, and who cleave to him with purpose of heart.

There is, therefore, included in faith an union of soul to Christ as a Saviour. All its faculties of understanding, affection, and will, are combined in the reception of him. While the testimony revealed in the gospel concerning him is believed, he himself is trusted in as all-sufficient, powerful, merciful, and faithful, and is stedfastly adhered to in the freeness and completeness of his salvation. There is in this act of the soul an essential difference from a mere assent to the historical truth of Christianity: for it involves a perception of Christ's infinite loveliness and glory, an eager closing with him, an entire confidence in him, obedience to him, and waiting upon him.

Hence, the possession of this faith is mentioned as an infallible sign of a regenerate state. "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God;"* the meaning of which proposition is not, that whosoever gives full assent to this as an historical truth is regenerate; for this is the attainment of fallen angels, and of many wicked men: but that whosoever has that state of soul in regard to it which the faith of the gospel includes, is the subject of the renovation and sanctification of the Holy Spirit. This faith is so inseparably conjoined with salvation, that wherever its existence is ascertained, its possessor is furnished with infallible evidence of union to Christ and eternal happiness. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on Him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life." He that believeth on him is not condemned; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. "We are all,"

* 1 John, v. 1.

says the apostle, addressing his fellow disciples, "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." *

The importance then of right views of saving faith is very obvious. It is essentially connected with salvation, and furnishes decisive evidence of a safe state. How desirable is it then to be able from a scriptural knowledge of its nature and character to ascertain whether it really is possessed! Such knowledge will serve as a directory in self-examination, and may preserve from fatal mistakes in a matter of infinite concernment.

III. Another evidence of a regenerate state is, genuine repentance in contradistinction to distress of mind arising from conviction of sin, and fear of punishment. Though there can be no true repentance without conviction of sin, there often is conviction of sin, and consequent apprehension of danger, where there is no true repentance. They can form, therefore, no certain sign of actual renovation of heart.

Yet it is to be feared that persons often rest satisfied with these as marks of their conversion. They have had strong convictions of sin, have been distressed for a length of time as the natural consequence, have felt and owned the justice of God in the punishment threatened, have had violent emotions of sorrow and fear, and afterwards attained to a confident hope. Under a sense of the awful greatness and majesty of God, they have seen their nothingness before him, their perishing condition as sinners, their incapability of helping themselves, and have confessed their sins, saying, "We have sinned, have played the fools, and have erred exceedingly." In this state of mind it is probable that a reformation is produced, that open sins are forsaken, that deep earnestness in the use of the means of grace is exhibited, and that the whole life assumes a new and promising aspect. All this is so far well, that it accords with the experience of those who are truly regenerate: but it can furnish no sure evidence of the existence of this mighty change, since it is felt by many who are not real Christians. It often issues in conversion to God; but it frequently does

* John, v. 24; iii. 17; Gal. iii. 26.

not, and therefore only proves that feelings connected with the great subject of religion have been experienced, more or less intense, without affording any sure ground by which to decide the infinitely important question of actual and personal safety.

Genuine repentance, on the other hand, arises from a sense of the holiness and moral excellency of God, from hatred to sin on its own account as infinitely odious, from sorrow for having done what in itself is evil, and offensive and dishonouring to God. It includes deep and unfeigned humiliation, spiritual poverty of spirit, contrition of heart, and desires to be delivered from sin. It is distinguished from what is termed legal repentance by this, that the understanding is illuminated, and the heart changed, as well as the conscience affected; and in consequence of the view which is entertained of the beauty and loveliness of God's glorious character, the whole soul in tender contrition voluntarily yields and prostrates itself before him. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born." Penitents are thus brought to feel not only that they are guilty, but that they are unholy; to abase themselves in their own sight as unclean as well as undone; freely to renounce themselves, and humbly to trust and hope in the God of mercy and salvation. Hence they begin to deny themselves to the principles and character which are natural to them; willingly to mortify what they now view as an evil in itself, against which their hostility is directed; to forsake all that is opposed to the authority of Christ, and fully and perseveringly to follow him.

That this genuine repentance is inseparable from salvation, and consequently is a sure sign of a regenerate state, is unquestionable. Wherever its existence can be decidedly ascertained, there can be no doubt of personal safety and final happiness. This is affirmed, in a variety of declarations, by the authoritative announcements of Heaven. "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and

a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. Thus saith the High and Lofty One who inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."* Our Lord very frequently in the course of his ministry taught the same important and consoling truth. He directed the attention of his disciples to a beautiful illustration of it in the case of a woman who brought an alabaster box of ointment, and who stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and to wipe them with the hairs of her head; and to whom he said, "Her sins, which are many, are forgiven."† The same doctrine is set forth in the parable of the pharisee and publican; in which the latter is represented as "standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, says our Lord, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased: and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."‡

Hence, the importance of clearly ascertaining, by self-examination, the existence of true repentance; that repentance which consists in a change of mind and affection with respect to God, to his law, to the Saviour and his salvation, to this world and that which is to come, to sin, and to holiness. Nor would it be difficult to discover whether it really is possessed or not, if persons were only impartial in the investigation, and observed from the workings of their hearts, whether they have unfeigned hatred to sin as in itself evil, are in some measure emptied of the spirit of pride and self-sufficiency, are abased and humbled in their own eyes, solely depend on God who is rich in mercy, count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, are tender in their consciences, concerned to attain holiness, and sorrowing for remaining defilements and corruptions. Pro-

* Psalm li. 17; Isaiah, lvii. 15.

† Luke, vii. 40—50

‡ Luke xviii. 9—15.

viding they were but honest in regard to themselves, they might surely come to know, with no inconsiderable degree of certainty, whether they abhor and forsake sin, love and practice holiness, delight in God and in the doing of his will, and truly mourn that there should still be so much in them opposed to his glorious excellencies. They would thus ascertain by scriptural evidence whether they have passed from death unto life; whether their contrition be that godly sorrow which worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.

IV. Another evidence of a regenerate state is, a deep solicitude to obtain peace and joy only in God's appointed way in contradistinction to an eager grasping at comfort as the chief and ultimate object of desire. Persons who are the subjects of mere natural repentance, who are alarmed by a view of the consequences of their sins, desire above all things comfort, that is, relief from their present painful apprehensions, by an assurance of deliverance from wrath and admission into heaven. They are easily made to believe that they have attained to what they so fervently desire; the promises of the gospel are forced to speak to them consolation; their wounds are healed slightly by the soothing voice of an adversary who has transformed himself into an angel of light, and who says, Peace, peace, when there is no peace. They are confident that their sins are pardoned, that they are in a justified state, that they have great enjoyment in religion, and that they must evermore guard against a doubt of their salvation. The case of such persons is described by our Lord in the parable of the sower, as hearing the word, and anon with joy receiving it; as being affected and delighted with it for a time; as making a profession of it while their excitement and confidence continue,—which may be during their lives, unless circumstances occur to induce them to disavow their profession of godliness.

Real penitents, on the other hand, whose hearts are truly humbled, are deeply solicitous to obtain peace and joy only in God's time and way. They are chiefly anxious concerning their own sincerity, to be delivered from all mistake and deception in a matter of infinite moment, to be divested of a self-righteous and self-suffi-

cient spirit, and to be found entirely relying on the sure foundation laid by the Redeemer's obedience and death. They grieve that their abhorrence of sin is not greater, that they are not more successful in striving against it, that their humiliation is not still deeper, that their consciences are not more tender, and that they have not more of the broken and the contrite heart which God will not despise. Comfort is not that which they above all things else desire: it is to win Christ and be found in him; it is to have the enmity of their hearts entirely subdued, and to be reconciled to God through the death of his Son; it is truly to attain the penitence and faith in the possession of which the consolation of the gospel may be administered to them. Yet, the God of hope fills their hearts with all joy and peace in believing, and causes them to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. He who has been anointed to bind up the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, gives them the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.

To this view of the disposition of real penitents, it is no valid objection to allege, that we seem to hinder awakened sinners from coming at once to the Saviour, and immediately receiving the joy of a free and full salvation. On the contrary, we would direct all to the infinitely important duty of believing on the name of the only begotten Son of God; and would answer the inquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" in the words of the apostle, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." But was not the person who first proposed this question, convinced of sin, deeply humbled and alarmed? He is said to have called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and anxiously inquired for salvation. It is most certain, that men must be made sensible of their being under guilt and condemnation, and imbibe a spirit corresponding to their actual condition as perishing sinners, before they will earnestly desire, and eagerly receive, the Saviour exhibited and offered in the gospel. In dealing with them, therefore, according to their

rational nature, God leads them into a wilderness before he speaks comfortably unto them : he humbles them, brings them to feel their extreme necessity, and to despair of themselves, and then pours into their hearts the joy of his salvation, and the blessedness of the man whose transgression is forgiven. In this arrangement true penitents are taught to acquiesce ; and unlike unhumbled and self-sufficient persons who selfishly regard their own comfort as the sum and substance of religion, they seek for peace and joy only in the way of deep humiliation, by exclusively trusting in the Redeemer, by mingling their tears of penitential sorrow with their songs of praise, by holy jealousy, watchfulness, and prayer, and by continuing to look unto Christ whom they have pierced, and to mourn for him. In this way they get comfort ; are made glad with the light of their heavenly Father's countenance ; and are often enabled to rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Their exalted views of the glory of the Saviour's person, the excellency of his offices, the sufficiency of his work, and the holy and perfect nature of his salvation, lead them fully to repose in him, and furnish their hearts with peace.

V. Another evidence of being the subject of regenerating and sanctifying grace is, a resemblance to the Redeemer, in meekness, humility, and gentleness of disposition. The opposite of this disposition is natural to man ; whose native spirit is proud, selfish, irritable, and revengeful ; and who evinces the change wrought on him by the Spirit of God when he exhibits a different temper of mind. That this, accordingly, will be manifested by every genuine penitent is evident, not only from the nature of repentance which includes humility, but from the statements of our Lord, in which he declares that the meek are blessed ; for they shall inherit the earth : the merciful are blessed ; for they shall obtain mercy : the peace makers are blessed ; for they shall be called the children of God.

These virtues were most eminently displayed in the character of the meek and lowly Jesus. The design of his redemption is to produce in his disciples a resemblance to himself ; to lead them to be meek, forgiving,

and gentle towards all men as he was ; and it is only in proportion as this resemblance is advanced, that they have evidence of being partakers of his grace. How can his Spirit dwell in those who have not in this respect the same mind which was in Christ ? “ If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above, is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits.”* If in regard to all men, and more especially those who have injured us, we entertain a benevolent disposition, we wish them good, and do them good as we have opportunity ; if we make it manifest that we put on as the children of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another ; then have we evidence that we have not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit of Christ ; and that we possess the docility and meekness characteristic of those who shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.

* James, iii. 14—18.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE SIGNS AND EVIDENCES OF REGENERATION
CONTINUED.

IN instituting an inquiry in order to ascertain the reality of their personal religion, Christians are apt to be misled, by having their attention diverted from the proper object of examination to the recollection of the times and places from which to date their conversion. For reasons which were formerly assigned, it rarely happens that such times and places can be accurately known; the mind ought not, therefore, to be embarrassed with their consideration when attempting to come to a conclusion as to its actual condition before God; since the question for decision is, not how or when regeneration took place, but whether there be satisfactory evidence to prove its existence. This is all that is desirable to discover; and when it is manifested by the present state of the heart and life, whatever may have been the previous emotions of the mind, the proper object of inquiry is attained.

Hence the importance of being familiar with the scriptural proofs of regeneration. It has been already remarked, that we may regard as of this description, a sense of the beauty and glory of spiritual things; a cordial acceptance of Christ and reliance upon him; unfeigned hatred of sin, and sorrow on account of it; a deep solicitude to obtain peace and joy only in God's appointed way; and a resemblance to Christ, more especially in meekness, humility, and gentleness. There are some other evidences which prove the same fact; and to these I shall now briefly advert.

I. A prevailing concern for the honour and glory of God in contradistinction to mere zeal for opinions and a

party. It is well to be zealously affected for the truth ; and all who truly love it will be disposed earnestly, though meekly, to contend for it: but mere zeal can furnish no sure evidence of regeneration, because it is exhibited by the foes of Christianity as well as by its friends, by those who are manifestly not under its sanctifying influence as well as by those who are. Who could be more zealous than the Jews in opposing the gospel and in persecuting its ministers? "I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God."* Who could be more zealous than the Pharisees, who encompassed sea and land to make one proselyte? Might we not refer to the case of modern infidels, as affording an example of violent zeal in propagating their opinions? This feeling, therefore, can form no criterion of the possession of real religion, or of the want of it.

It is otherwise, however, when it arises from deep concern for the honour and glory of God, and for the furtherance of his cause. This heavenly principle is implanted in the heart by the Holy Spirit; permanently operates with more or less power; and its existence may be known to the individual by the testimony of consciousness. Though from self love he might deceive himself by flattering himself that he had this testimony, when in reality he had it not, he may with much accuracy ascertain the fact by looking narrowly into the habitual frame of his mind. May he not discover what are the chief motives by which his conduct is regulated? He will, indeed, remark that his principles are mingled with much imperfection; that in all things he fails and comes far short of the standard of duty; and that even when reviewing a life which may be regarded as holy, he has ample ground for deep humiliation. But may he not also observe, that there have been feelings in operation in regard to the glory of God, the excellency, worth,

* Romans, x. 3, 4.

and honour of the Redeemer, which the Scriptures teach him to ascribe to the renovation of the Holy Spirit? To whom else can the concern which is experienced for advancing the interests of pure and undefiled religion, be attributed? From what other cause could have originated zeal which acts not by a temporary ebullition, but with the regularity of fixed principle; zeal which consists in spiritual affection, which is guided by the Divine word, which restrains sin, which accelerates the progress of holiness, and the great objects of which are the cause and the glory of God? These objects, wherever the heart is rightly affected towards them, must awaken earnest desire for their advancement; and lead to the use of the legitimate means by which so important an end may be obtained. They are in themselves great, ennobling, and confessedly deserving of the deepest regard, and of the persevering exertions of every creature: and, unlike those things for which the ignorant and superstitious are zealous, they furnish a warrant by their excellency and magnitude, to the most enlightened reason, to put forth every exertion for their maintenance and increase. In this way the apostles felt in the ardent discharge of the duties of their high office; and to be inspired with zeal like theirs, pure, celestial, generous, and universal, is to possess their spirit and character. "The love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again," 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

II. Another evidence of regeneration is, the love and practice of holiness, in contradistinction to the performance of the mere external duties of religion and morality. These duties may, in appearance, be discharged with much zeal and punctuality, while no real proof is afforded that the heart is right in the sight of God. There may be, and often has been, a zealous attention to rites and ceremonies, and a performance of the duties usually termed moral, when all the evil passions of an unsanctified nature are cherished in the soul. Who could be more exact in regard to religious observances, externally,

than those whom our Lord has designated, on account of their malice and wickedness, a generation of vipers? How laborious, in their services, are those mistaken persons who look to penances and pilgrimages as means of recommending themselves to the favour of God! There are many causes, besides religion, to induce mankind to be zealous in the performance of outward duties, whether they relate to Divine worship or to morals. They have been so accustomed to regard them with confidence, as evidences of piety, that they naturally conclude that when they are exhibited by themselves, or others, its possession is certainly proved. They are enjoined by God, useful to society, and their uniform practice confers dignity and amiability upon those who perform them; and the inference is, that they are certainly Christians who are regular in their discharge. That such conclusion may be, and in innumerable instances is at variance with truth, is manifest from the fact, that the external virtues to which I have referred may be cultivated from the force of education, from habit, from regard to reputation, and from other motives, which have no relation to religion. The young man who came to our Lord inquiring what he should do to inherit eternal life, was, touching the letter of the law, blameless; and yet he lacked one thing, without which all his other attainments were nugatory, as evidences of vital godliness.

But a sure proof, on the other hand, of regeneration, is, the actual love and practice of universal holiness. By this I mean, that the duties which the word of God enjoins are performed with a right frame of mind towards them, from regard to the will of God, and gratitude and love to the Redeemer. Their actual performance is necessary to attest the existence of real religion—so necessary, that where the former is totally wanting, the latter has not yet been attained. This is the only way in which its fruit can be shown to others; and when thus exhibited, it becomes an evidence to ourselves. “Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. Whosoever is

born of God doth not commit sin ; for his seed remaineth in him : and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments : and his commandments are not grievous.”*

In order to render the evidence arising from this source satisfactory, it is necessary that our keeping the commandments should be diligent, uniform, and universal.

It must be accompanied with diligence. It is not sufficient to be negatively blameless ; it is necessary to be positively and actively holy : to make obedience to the will of God the object of earnest desire and of deliberate purpose. For Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.” They that are Christ’s, are willingly his ; they render to him the supremacy over their hearts, to which he lays claim ; and they are anxious not only to refrain from whatever is offensive to him, but to observe all his commandments. In obedience to his authority, they deny themselves, take up their cross, and follow the Redeemer. This conduct is so habitual, as to characterize their lives.

Hence, their obedience is universal ; that is, it has respect unto all the commandments. In this respect it essentially differs from that of unregenerate persons, whose obedience is restricted to those duties that are accordant with their taste, and that are necessary to secure their reputation. The disposition produced in the heart in regeneration leads to benevolence as well as to the practice of piety—to godliness, righteousness, and temperance—to discharge the obligations which we owe to God, to our neighbour, and to ourselves. Before our conduct, therefore, can be adduced as a proof of a regenerate state, we must inquire whether we live in the fear and love of God—habitually cherish towards him the reverence, complacency, and submission to which he is entitled—are regular in his worship, and are using those means which he has enjoined for making preparation for eternity.

* John, xv. 14 ; 1 John, iii. 3, 4 ; v. 3—5.

It is also evident, that scripture lays peculiar stress on the faithful discharge of the duties which we owe to our fellow-creatures and to ourselves. This is spoken of as forming an essential part of the Christian character—as indispensable to prove our relation to Him who came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil. The unrighteous are excluded from the kingdom of God no less than the idolaters and the unclean. “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.”* Before, therefore, we are warranted to adduce our conduct as evidence of real conversion, we must impartially inquire, whether it be in regard to our fellow creatures sincere, just, honest, and faithful; whether we are animated by a spirit of kindness and goodwill towards them; and whether we are, in respect to ourselves, temperate, sober, and diligent in opposing sin, and cultivating personal holiness. It should be ascertained whether we are in the habit of preferring our duty to our inclinations; or, are yielding to our peculiar dispositions; urging, as an apology for our so doing, their being constitutional infirmities.

The importance of this inquiry, as furnishing a criterion of regeneration, is founded on the undoubted principle, that there is a close and inseparable connexion between the state of the heart and the life. The renovation of the powers, faculties, and affections of the soul, necessarily extends to the conduct—to the whole conduct, as it respects God and man; and it is no more possible for religion to be living and operative in the mind without attesting its efficacy in visible fruit, than it is for the sun to shine without sending forth beams, or the principle of animation to exist in the body without breathing. On this ground, believers are said to be God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works; and to show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness unto his marvellous light. Eph. ii. 10; 1 Pet. ii. 10.

* Psalm xxiv. 3—8.

III. Another evidence of regeneration is, growing love to Christ. This is implied in what has been already advanced; but its great importance requires particular illustration. One of the most striking effects which immediately follows the saving illumination of the understanding by the Holy Ghost is the change which takes place in the views and feelings with regard to the Saviour. The truths of the gospel no longer appear as themes for speculation, but as eternal realities, of greater moment than the whole world, and the claims of which to his most earnest attention the penitent owns and feels. He is amazed at his former careless and indifferent frame of mind, at the forbearance and long-suffering patience of God, and wonders how he could have overlooked what appears to him now as so reasonable, so necessary to his escape from the wrath to come, and so divinely suited to his condition. He on whom all human means had proved inefficacious, and who could urge the most frivolous excuses for delaying to open the heart to the Redeemer, now feels that he cannot rest, that happiness must remain a stranger to him, till he obtains an interest in him; that with the full cordiality of his soul he looks to him, flees to him, cries to him for deliverance, and ventures to hope in his mercy; that his will, affections, and desires, are changed; that he is most powerfully drawn unto Christ, with the cords of love, and with the bands of a man.

The New Testament represents the early Christians as characterised by their love to Christ. Their esteem of him, and gratitude towards him, were so powerful, that they habitually constrained them cheerfully to perform every labour through which they might testify their love to him, and caused them to rejoice when they were counted worthy of suffering shame for his sake. Though he was unseen by them, he was ever present in their hearts; he ruled over their affections, and was to them all and in all; and rather than allow themselves to be separated from the love of Christ, they submitted to tribulation and distress, persecution and nakedness, peril and the sword. They felt and acted under the consideration, that his abasement on the cross, and prevailing intercession in

heaven, furnished a claim to undeviating and eternal devotedness to his cause;—and associating his name with every feeling of moral loveliness, and every act of dutiful obedience, its mention wrought on them with the efficacy of a charm, and suggested motives to fidelity and perseverance of irresistible force. How precious must it have been to him, who, when he was told that he should be bound at Jerusalem, and delivered into the hands of the Gentiles, replied, “What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart; for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus?” *

Were I required to mention the most marked feature in the character of real Christians, that by which they may be known and distinguished, I would fix upon fervent love to the Redeemer. To them all, Christ is precious; his name is fragrant as ointment poured forth: it has a power to awaken similar sympathies in the hearts of individuals situated at different extremes of the world: on this there is a harmony of feeling, an union of sentiment, by which all the children of the redeemed are united in the bonds of a holy fellowship under their great and adorable Head. They love Him who veiled his majesty and glory, that he might by his meritorious obedience and atoning sufferings, deliver them from guilt and wretchedness. “Whom having not seen they love; and in whom, though they now see him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.” †

IV. Another evidence of regeneration is, an earnest desire for the full enjoyment of the salvation of the gospel in contradistinction to a mere deliverance from wrath. To desire the latter is natural to man as a sentient being; he cannot but wish to escape from suffering; and no change of heart, therefore, is requisite to the production of such desire. The wicked are represented as anxious to participate in this way in the privileges of the righteous; as vehemently crying, “Lord, Lord, open unto us.” ‡ Such desire can furnish no sure evidence of the existence of those affections which delight in holiness.

* Acts, xxi. 13.

† 1 Pet. i. 10.

‡ Matth. xxv. 11.

This evidence is to be found in desiring salvation from sin;—a desire which exists in the mind of man only in consequence of the operation of the Holy Spirit. It was this desire which led David to say, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”* It was under the influence of this desire that the apostle Paul uttered the emphatic words, “O, wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!” It characterizes every individual whose heart has in any measure been purified by faith, and who hungers and thirsts after righteousness: it may, therefore, be regarded as a sure sign of having been born of God.

It may be presumed that this earnest desire for the full possession of God’s salvation exists wherever there is a consciousness of hatred of sin, of persevering opposition to it, and a diligent use of all those means by which it may be mortified and subdued. The value which is attached to an object is shewn by the efforts which are made to obtain it. Our Lord likened the “kingdom of heaven unto treasure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.” Or, to “a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”† In this way the infinite worth of the blessings of salvation is deeply felt by him who has come to the knowledge of sin, who has a sense of the glorious excellency of the God whom he has offended, and who desires above all things the enjoyment of his favour. When he finds, after perhaps a laborious pursuit, the pearl of great price, the treasure hid in the field of divine truth, his bosom glows with that joy which angels experience when they rejoice over one sinner that repenteth. The veil is now taken off his heart, and he sees in those pages, which he may have often read, the Saviour from sin and misery suited to his case—the Saviour in the glories of his person, in his wondrous

* Psalm cxxxix. 23, 24.

† Matth. xiii. 44—49.

grace and condescension, and in the sufficiency of that one offering by which they are for ever perfected who believe on him. It is now that the love which brought the Lord from glory, clothed him with the nature of man, carried him through sufferings, lifted him up on the cross, penetrates his whole soul, and gains an ascendancy over it so entire, that every thing can be readily parted with for the sake of winning this great object of desire. It is now that the heart, dissolved in penitential tenderness, fixes supremely upon Christ, and regards him as the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Whatever may have been previously the sources of his enjoyment, whatever may have been his attainments, he counts them as loss for Christ; yea, doubtless, and he counts all things but loss for the excellency of his knowledge, that he may win Christ, and be found in him, not having his own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith.

V. The last evidence which I shall mention of regeneration is perseverance and increase. These I notice together, because they are closely connected. They are often declared in scripture to be necessary signs of a state of actual salvation; so necessary, that where they are totally wanting, all other signs are of little value. Their importance as evidences arises partly from the trials of real principle which all Christians have to endure, and to overcome which furnishes the strongest presumption that the heart is right in the sight of God. It also arises from the undoubted fact, that all who are really regenerate will persevere unto the end, because they have been from the beginning chosen unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and the belief of the truth. If it be thus certain from the immutability of God's purpose, the nature of the new covenant, the express promises of God, and the power, love, and intercession of Christ, that all real converts will continue to the end, it is of course evident that all those whose faith is temporary, and who turn away from the holiness of the Gospel, are not regenerated: "For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our con-

fidence stedfast unto the end.”* The crowning evidence of the complete safety of our state is our continuing in the faith grounded and settled, and are not moved away from the hope of the gospel.

Lest any should imagine, however, that by perseverance is only meant an empty, fruitless profession, the scriptures mention at the same time, as included in it, growth in every christian grace. When believers are increasing in spiritual knowledge, in deep humiliation, in faith, in meekness, in concern for the Divine glory, in all the attainments of christian obedience, in devotedness to Christ, and in universal conformity to his image, there is satisfactory evidence of their being in reality what they are in profession. The apostle Paul constantly aimed at this progressive advancement: “I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”† In all his epistles he exhorts and commands believers to make this increase; and frequently intimates, that it was in this way they were to attest the reality of their personal religion. Concerning the Philippians, he says, “This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent, that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”‡ This, in short, is represented in the Old Testament scriptures, and the New, as the most marked characteristic of those who are truly the subjects of renewing and sanctifying grace. “The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.—The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.—Those that be planted in the house of the Lord, shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall bring forth fruit

* Heb. iii. 14.

† Philip. 13—15.

‡ Philip. i. 9—12.

in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord is upright." *

Wherever this holy progress is making, there are in active operation all the graces alluded to; but more especially deep humility and lively faith. The former of these, in a very eminent degree, is a never failing concomitant of spiritual growth and prosperity. For it is most obvious that in proportion as knowledge enlarges of the holy and righteous character of God displayed in the person of Christ, in the same proportion will the intrinsic evil and odiousness of sin appear, and, consequently, will self-abhorrence and humiliation on account of it be felt. This effect will be produced more and more by every fresh discovery of the holiness and majesty of God, the nature of redemption, the extent of our obligations, and at the same time our ingratitude, to Him who for our sakes humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. It was when Paul was in labour abundant, and after he had abounded in the work of the Lord, that he spake of himself as the chief of sinners, as not worthy of being called an apostle, and as less than the least of all saints. It was many years after the evangelical prophet had known and served the God of salvation, that he exclaimed, on obtaining a new view of his glory, "Woe is me; for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips; for I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." †

* Prov. iv. 18; Psalm xcii. 12—15.

† Isaiah, vi. 5.

BOOK III.

THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN SANCTIFICATION;
AND IN THE VARIOUS HOLY EXERCISES
OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

SANCTIFICATION: ITS NATURE AND AUTHOR.

SANCTIFICATION is the continuation of the work of the Holy Spirit on human nature begun in regeneration. While justification is an act of God's free grace, the effect of which is a relative change, sanctification is a work, really and progressively wrought in us, the effect of which is our increasing holiness. The former consists in the remission of sins, and a title to life on account of the righteousness of Christ; the latter in deliverance from the power of sin by the renovation of our nature, and by implanting in our hearts, and maintaining in operation, the principles of righteousness and godliness. Justification is perfected at once: the work of sanctification is carried on gradually, is possessed in different measures by the different members of the body of Christ, and is in no instance complete till death.

But while these blessings are thus distinct, they are never separate. They are so united in the covenant of grace that the one cannot be enjoyed without the other. They who experience the fulfilment of the promise, "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," become at the same time the subjects of that other promise in which the nature of sanctification is so clearly described, "I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people." It is impossible in the nature of things that the case could be otherwise. For the title to life which is conferred in justification would be of little value unless there was communicated inherent holiness; the privilege of adoption would be merely nominal, without conformity

to the image of God; the inheritance of the saints in light would afford no enjoyment, unless we were made meet for it. The great design of the economy of grace, is the restoration of all who share in its blessings to that holiness without which no man can see the Lord, or hold communion with him.

The first thing that claims our attention in entering on this subject is, the nature of sanctification. The term is frequently used to denote a separation from a common to a sacred purpose. Hence, things destined to the service of God, such as the temple, the vessels and utensils necessarily employed in Divine worship, and the persons who ministered at the altar, were termed holy. For the same reason this appellation was applied to the whole nation of Israel, and to the land which they inhabited.

But sanctification, in the strict and theological acceptation of the term, signifies, a renovation of our whole nature by the Spirit of God, by which evil principles and habits are destroyed, spiritual affections are created, and, as the consequence, the life becomes fruitful in all good works. It is a real work wrought in us, the product of Almighty power; effected not by moral suasion merely, but by supernatural influence. The manner in which this is accomplished, is beyond our knowledge, as it probably surpasses our comprehension; but the fact is amply confirmed by the Divine testimony. This testimony assures us the Holy Spirit is the peculiar sanctifier of all believers; describes them as elect, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience; and as washed and sanctified by the Spirit of our God.

The primary idea included in sanctification, is purification. Hence the frequency with which this view of it is presented in scripture, in connexion with the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit. "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you:" and as an explanation of this language, it is immediately added, "I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do

them." The same view is taken of sanctification by the apostle to Titus, when he says, "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour." In like manner, the effect of the application of the blood of Christ is represented to be our purification from the defilement of sin: "He gave himself that he might redeem from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood. For the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God cleanseth us from all sin." The same notion is held out to us when we are commanded diligently to use appointed means for promoting our personal holiness: "Let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and the spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God: every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself."

This phraseology with which the Bible abounds, clearly signifies the defilement of human nature. Its deep pollution is implied in all the emblems used in scripture to denote the purifying efficacy of the blood of Christ, applied by the Holy Spirit. This is compared to the effects of fire, water, soap, nitre, and whatever has a cleansing quality. We are represented as impure, and even loathsome, in consequence of this impurity, before God. We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and "We all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

The pollution of sin is that property of it which is contrary to the holiness of God, and which has affected the whole nature of man. The beauty and excellency of an intelligent being consist in conformity to the purity of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, or to look on evil. This conformity mankind have lost; the mind is estranged from God, and in its operation opposed to Him; its defilement is habitual and universal; and exhibited by a proneness to the commission of what is vile in itself, and most deeply offensive to God. Hence the shame and self-abasement felt by all true penitents, that is, by all who have had a just view of the defilement of their nature. "Behold I am vile! What shall I

answer thee ? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear : but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes. Behold I was shapen in iniquity ; and in sin did my mother conceive me. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions : and my sin is ever before me.”

As the necessity of atonement to remove the guilt of sin was taught by typical sacrifices under the law, so the numerous ordinances of purification, which were designed to take away legal uncleanness, were intended to show the defilement and odiousness of sin. This was particularly the case, in regard to the ordinances relating to the purification of the leper. The application of the blood of the sacrifice, offered, on his behalf, to certain parts of his body, intimated that the whole nature of man requires to be cleansed from moral pollution. The institutions of the law, though they purified the legally unclean, and thus answered their typical design, could not wash from the inherent defilement of sin. It was necessary that a fountain should be opened for sin, and for uncleanness ; and that the blood of Christ should purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God.

The meritorious, or procuring cause of our purification, is the blood of Jesus Christ the Son of God ; the cleansing efficacy of which was typified by the blood of the sacrifices under the law, which, as it was offered unto God, made atonement or reconciliation for sin, and which, as sprinkled on the things to be legally purified, made them holy. It removes the defilement of sin, by rendering the sinner who obtains an interest in it, as one who is washed from corporeal uncleanness, and by taking away from the conscience that shame which prevents it from exercising confidence in God. The Holy Spirit, wherever he convinces of sin, and gives a sense of shame and self-abhorrence, directs to this only true source of purification ; and produces that faith in the blood of sprinkling by which Christ becomes the sanctification, as well as the redemption of his people. To this precious blood the

penitent looks for spiritual healing and purification. Nor does he look in vain : He whose office it is to apply the benefits purchased by Christ, makes effectual application of the fountain opened, to take away sin and uncleanness. The defilement of sin is taken away, and that process of purification is begun which terminates in perfect holiness.

Further : there is included in sanctification the communication of a holy frame, or constitution of mind. This frame or disposition, though increased in the use of appointed means, is originally produced, and constantly maintained, by the Holy Spirit. "The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and all thy soul." The product of that Divine operation to which this language alludes, abides in the renewed man as a vital principle of grace, acts in opposition to sin, and leads to a life of holiness. In consequence of its heavenly origin and peculiar excellency, it is called in scripture, a Divine nature—a life hid with Christ in God—and a new creation. In proportion as it predominates over the whole man, is the image of God attained. It consists in a disposition of heart conformable to the will of God, and inclining to the practice of whatever duty he has commanded. It is the seed whence the fruits of the Spirit spring forth, which are love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, fidelity, meekness, and temperance. It is beautifully and forcibly represented by the metaphorical language in which our Lord describes it : "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst ; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up into everlasting life."

Hence the permanence of this new nature. Amid the vicissitudes of this chequered scene, the trials and difficulties with which it is encompassed, it looks to heaven, inclines the soul towards God, and to all the acts and duties of obedience. It may be checked in its progress by negligence and temptations, but its tendency is to advance in strength and fruitfulness, till it is perfected in those blissful regions where there is nothing to hurt or destroy. It is an incorruptible seed, which survives mere

natural principles, from whatever source they are derived, and by which the emancipated spirit, at death, is made meet for that celestial habitation, where it liveth and abideth for ever. It is a heavenly disposition, productive of that spirituality of mind which is life and peace, extending its influence to the obedience of the life, and leading to a denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts.

It may further be remarked, in regard to sanctification, that it is progressive till the end of life. In this respect, as well as in others, it differs from justification, which is a single act of God's free grace ; and also from regeneration, which is a change instantaneously wrought by the Holy Spirit. The progressive nature of sanctification is clearly pointed out by those expressions of scripture in which we are exhorted to grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour ; to increase with the increase of God ; and in which it is promised that he who has begun the good work, will perform it till the day of Jesus Christ. Spiritual increase and improvement are often denoted by the growth of plants and trees. "I will be as the dew unto Israel ; he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. I will pour water on him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground ; I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring ; and they shall spring up as among the grass, as the willows by the water-courses. The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree : he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God."

This beautiful and metaphorical language clearly expresses, that grace in the sanctification of the believer is progressive. Like the growth of a tree, to which its progress is here compared, it is imperceptible—not to be discerned by its motion, but by its effects. But though we cannot observe the advancing of a plant, it is manifest, at intervals, that advancement is made. Growth in grace is not less apparent to the spiritual eye. The Divine principle in the heart, cherished by the dew of heavenly influence, and improved by diligence and prayer, gradually acquires strength, and reaches its ultimate end, the sanctification of the whole man. It would often be subdued

by the force of corruption and temptation, but for the powerful and compassionate operations of that Holy Spirit who forsakes not the purifying work which he begins. Conducted by Him, those who are subjects of this work make progress in holiness, not merely by the possession of every grace, but in the vigour with which every grace is attained and exercised; and their path is like the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

While sanctification in regard to the whole man is progressive, this progress is peculiarly marked by increasing humility, faith, love, and unreserved submission to the will of God. As that perception of the excellency of Divine things, which is communicated by the Holy Spirit in regeneration, becomes more clear, and affords a fuller view of the character of God as holy, just, merciful, and faithful, the intrinsic evil of sin and the aggravations of our own transgressions are better known, more deeply felt, and consequently true humiliation is habitual. The Christian, as he advances in his course, has occasion to remark how much there is in himself opposed to the law of God—how defective his best services are when tried by that perfect standard—how ungrateful he is in regard to the innumerable obligations under which redeeming love has placed him; so that, while there is great increase of holiness, there is a deeper sense of personal unworthiness and self-abhorrence. In this state of mind, his dependence on Christ is more simple and absolute; he looks to him in the exercise of stronger faith for righteousness and strength; for grace to improve the talents and opportunities of doing good which are given to him; and he relies on his atonement and meritorious obedience for acceptance, life, peace, and admission into the kingdom of God. The gracious sensibility of his affections is also promoted; his love to God, and to all who bear his image, while it has lost the vehemence with which it may have been accompanied in earlier years, has acquired greater energy, is more steady and powerful in its influence, and produces a ready compliance with the call of duty, whether it lead to suffering or to action. Thus, the fulfilment of the apostle's prayer for the Philippians is experienced and fully manifested:—"This I pray, that your

love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment ; that ye may approve things that are excellent ; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”*

But when we affirm on such obvious grounds that the work of sanctification is progressive, we are not to be understood as maintaining that its advancement is regular and without interruption. Growth in grace is, indeed, an invariable concomitant of true holiness ; it is an active principle which, in its operation, increaseth strength, and which leads those who are under its influence to run and not be weary, and to walk and not be faint ; in the same way as a living and healthy child makes continual progress towards maturity. But as in the case of a child, its progress may be obstructed for a time by disease, accident, or the want of suitable nourishment ; so, in regard to the believer, the advancement of sanctification may be retarded by negligences, temptations, corruptions, and the careless use of those means divinely appointed for its increase. When in place of mortifying sin he gives way to it, a decay in holiness is the consequence ; just as disease in any part of the body has a tendency, when not speedily checked and eradicated, to injure the whole constitution. Should he become less watchful, less attentive to the ordinances of grace, and less solicitous about purity of heart and conduct, he will soon sensibly experience that the progress of the spiritual life is arrested, that his strength is diminished, and that his affections do not fix, as formerly, on Divine objects.

Besides, it ought to be remarked, that sanctification is often in a state of progression in those who are humbly walking with God, and diligently doing his will, when they themselves are inclined to think otherwise. The work may be thriving when they are apt to doubt its existence. When their minds are somewhat depressed, arising, either from external causes, or from the variability of human nature, their views and affections are, of

* Col. i. 9—13.

course, less lively, and they look at their own spiritual condition through an unfavourable medium. Or, perhaps they have struggled, and successfully struggled against trials and temptations; and, in consequence of the contest in which they have been engaged, enjoy less sensible comfort, and conclude on this ground that they possess less real holiness. Or, it may be, that, together with those graces, more closely connected with lively feeling and great spiritual enjoyment, which hold so prominent a place in the earlier part of the Christian course, those of obedient self-denial, humility, godly sorrow, holy fear, are more cultivated and invigorated; and thus an inference is deduced in regard to the actual state of the character at variance with truth.

While, then, it is consistent with fact, that sanctification is not uniform in its progress, and that its advancement, for a time, may be interrupted by various causes, it is also evident, that this work is, in all its real subjects, progressive. Though it meets with hindrances, it is ultimately carried on and perfected, when the soul at death passes into glory. It is the characteristic of grace, that it grows stronger and stronger; and, consequently, wherever it really exists, corruption becomes weaker and weaker.

But it must also be observed, that universality essentially belongs to sanctification. This work of God's Spirit renews, in the whole man, after the image of God. All his faculties, views, affections, purposes and conduct, come under its influence; his powers, principles, virtues and duties, are directed and purified by it. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." In this prayer the apostle specifies the whole nature of man as the object of sanctification;—the mind, the affections, and even the corporeal part of our frame. For the body, in so far as it has influence on the moral and religious constitution of our nature, is also made the servant of righteousness unto holiness.

The understanding, the presiding faculty of the soul, is renovated and illuminated, and rendered capable of

discerning the beauty and glory of spiritual things. These things appear in a new and affecting light; the glory of God is seen in Jesus Christ; the excellencies of the Redeemer are loved; and, by the process of sanctification, the whole man is gradually transformed unto the Divine image, by the Holy Spirit. The will also is freed from the bias of corruption, and makes choice of the things of God. It has power not only to determine in favour of that which is good, but resolutely to cleave to it. The affections, the prevailing bias of which is spiritual, are in a happy measure disentangled, and rise to heaven, where alone they find objects supremely worthy of them, adorned with undecaying beauty and loveliness. Even the mortal body, though still liable to weakness and corruption, is no longer in a state of servitude to sin, but has become a temple of the Holy Ghost. It also, when resuscitated in the morning of the resurrection, shall undergo a great change, when it shall be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body; when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality, and when the saying that is written shall be brought to pass, Death is swallowed up in victory.

While, therefore, sanctification is not complete in any part in the present state, its influence is universal. Though corruption is in no case fully eradicated till death, holiness extends to the whole man. It is not absolutely perfect in regard to any single faculty or affection of soul, and yet there is no faculty or affection of the soul which is not under its power. Nor is there any surer sign of the entire absence of sanctifying grace than the yielding to the dominion of any one sin, the habitual neglect of any known duty, and the devotement of any of our faculties to the service of unrighteousness. It was to redeem his people from all iniquity that Christ gave himself for them; and the great object in view in their regeneration and sanctification is the perfect conformity of the whole man to the image of God.

CHAPTER II.

SANCTIFICATION: THE MEANS OF ITS PRODUCTION.

HAVING thus shewn the nature of that sanctification, of which the Holy Spirit is the author, it remains that we notice the means which this Divine agent makes use of in its production. These may be comprehended under the four following heads—The Truth, Faith, Providence of God, and our own agency.

First, the Truth of God. “Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.” This is the principal means by which the work of sanctification is begun and carried on. It is in itself admirably adapted to this end, in its precepts and promises, warnings and threatenings. It is fitted to dispel the darkness of the understanding by the representation which it gives of the character of God; to remove its alienation and its guilty fears, by the satisfactory evidence which it furnishes of his mercy and love in the redemption of the world through Jesus Christ; to encourage the sinner to repent, and to forsake sin, by the abundant grace which it exhibits; and to persuade him to come to the Redeemer, by the view which it gives of his power and compassion to save. A primary design of the gospel is to reveal the love of God to a lost world, with the way in which, through the mediation of Christ, it is communicated; to induce mankind by the most powerful motives to renounce their sins, by betaking themselves for life and salvation to the only Redeemer; and to lead them to unite themselves by faith to Him, that they may receive the Spirit of holiness.

To all those whose hearts are open to the reception of the truth in the love of it, this means of sanctification must prove powerfully efficacious. Perfectly pure in

itself, it is the mirror in which infinite purity may be contemplated; in which the glories of the Divine character and perfections are so revealed as to engage the affections of the beholder, and fill his mind with the love of true excellence. In every view in which the truth as it is in Jesus can be regarded, whether as a treasury of promises, a directory for our conduct, a rule for our faith, the infallible counsel of our almighty and never-failing Friend, or the testament of our dying Redeemer, in which he bequeaths to us the inheritance which he has purchased by his blood, it is divinely calculated to enlighten, enliven, purify, comfort, and produce in us that disposition and frame of mind by which we shall be meet for heaven. If a principal part of sanctification consist in purity, is not the word of truth fitted by its influence to produce that effect? If sanctification be progressive, are not the scriptures, so rich in instruction, consolation, and admonition, and adapted to our circumstances in the varied stages of life, designed to promote it? If sanctification be universal, extending to all the powers and affections of our nature, that word of life must be peculiarly suited to produce it, which "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

But before the truth can be effectual to sanctification, it must be believed; and in order to its being believed aright, the nature must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

This leads me to remark, in the second place, that faith is an instrumental cause of our sanctification. The heart is said to be purified by faith; and when we remember that it is the means of our union to Christ, without whom we can do nothing; and that it is by this grace that the motives addressed to us in the gospel are efficacious on our minds; we readily understand why the scriptures should assign so prominent a place to faith as a means of sanctification. It is only by faith in Christ that his fulness can be accessible to us; that we can receive out of it grace to cleanse our nature from the defilement of sin, and to produce in us conformity to the will of God.

Hence they who receive the forgiveness of sins are said to be sanctified by faith that is in Christ ; to overcome the world by faith ; and to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked by the shield of faith. The principle of faith is so essentially connected with the existence of real holiness—with its exercise in the affections—with its growth in the character, that it is spoken of as the spring of spiritual life—as that by which it is maintained and promoted. How forcibly is this expressed by the apostle, in that epitome of his own experience, and of the experience of every believer :—" I am crucified with Christ ; nevertheless, I live ; yet not I, but Christ, that liveth in me : and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and who gave himself for me."

Did the person who is labouring to work out a righteousness of his own, on which he may rest his hopes for eternity, only believe that Christ by his obedience has procured a most perfect righteousness for him, which, together with a fulness of spiritual blessings, he gratuitously bestows, with what different feelings and prospects would he run in the way of the commandments ! With the burden of sin removed—with the spirit, not of bondage, but of adoption, rising in filial confidence to God—with Christ in the heart, the hope of glory, filling it with all joy and peace in believing, and with the Holy Spirit strengthening and establishing him in every good work—with what powerful advantages will he devote himself to the work of Christian obedience. It is now his happiness to be allowed to act or suffer for Him who loved him, and washed him from his sins in his own blood. What things were gain to him, those he counts but loss for Christ ; and counts all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord.

In the third place, the dispensations of providence are means of promoting sanctification. These are infinitely varied to the world, the church, and to individuals ; and to the subjects of sanctifying grace, in so far as they have opportunity of observing them, they convey much improvement. They are peculiarly salutary when they are afflictive ; and hence they are represented as a fire by

which those who are subjected to them are refined as silver is refined, and tried as gold is tried. The way in which the Holy Spirit renders them efficacious means of salvation is, by softening the heart to receive those impressions which they are calculated to produce;—by teaching the important lesson that the present is a state of trial and moral discipline;—by weaning the affections more and more from the things which are seen and temporal;—and by shutting up the believer to that portion which is to form his happiness through eternity.

But though afflictions are thus rendered peculiarly useful in the promotion of personal holiness, mercies, or what we are disposed to call by that name, are made conducive to the same end. These, when received as tokens of the lovingkindness of God, and pledges of greater blessings, fill the mind with gratitude and love, and prepare for those blissful regions where the inhabitants are employed in ascribing salvation and honour, and glory, to Him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever. All events and dispensations, whether their native tendency be to produce joy or sorrow, are made to work together for good to them who love God, and who are the called according to his purpose.

In the fourth place, our own agency is made use of by the Holy Spirit in promoting our sanctification. An important part of this work consists in resisting and mortifying sin,—that evil principle which has affected our whole frame, which is so ready to show itself in every possible way, and which strives to regain that ascendancy, which, in the case of the regenerate, it has lost. While the power that enables us to subdue sin, like every other good and perfect gift, comes down from the Father of lights, we are commanded diligently to employ this power for this purpose, and to persevere in its use till we have attained the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls. Hence the exhortations with which the scriptures abound: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.—Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the

earth.—Put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.—Let not sin, therefore, reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.—Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin; but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead; and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” *

* Philip. ii. 12, 13; Col. iii. 5—8; Eph. iv. 22—25; Rom. vi. 11—15.

CHAPTER III.

THE HOLY SPIRIT A COMFORTER.

THE Holy Spirit dwells in the people of God as their Comforter. In this capacity, his operations do not extend to the unconverted, or the world. He convinces the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; but he is in believers as the source of everlasting consolation and good hope. Accordingly, our Lord says, "I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."* The world cannot receive him as a Comforter. It seeth him not, neither knoweth him in that character. His operations in regard to it, refer to the conviction and conversion of sinners.

It is to believers, and to them only, that he has been promised as a Comforter. The promise was first given to the apostles, not as apostles, but as believers in Christ, who were to meet with difficulties and discomfort in his service, and who needed to be strengthened by the consolations of the Holy Spirit. This is the exclusive and the common privilege of all the followers of our Lord. Others seek relief from the troubles to which man is born, the unavoidable sorrows which are the lot of all—from the pleasures, or the amusements, or wisdom of the world; but on the followers of Christ the Sun of Righteousness has risen, and they walk in the light and consolation of the Holy Spirit.

* John, xiv. 16, 17.

He comforts them with infinite condescension ; with the tenderness of love ; with invincible power and efficacy ; with heavenly wisdom ; with seasonable adaptation to their circumstances ; and with perpetual friendship. He abides with them for ever.

I. The Holy Spirit comforts believers with infinite condescension and love. Is it not condescension in Him who is over all, God blessed for ever, to behold the things that are done in heaven and on earth ? Psalm cxiii. 5. But he does more than this with respect to the members of the body of Christ ; for he dwells in them, and abides with them for ever. “ For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” This is an act of boundless grace and condescension ; and it is followed up by continual kindness and love. The correction necessary for producing in them all the good pleasure of the Divine goodness, proceeds from parental tenderness as well as wisdom ; and, therefore, the Sanctifier adds, “ I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth : for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made. For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him : I hid me, and was wroth ; and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him : I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and his mourners,” Isa. lvii. 15—20.

When we think of the very lowly condition of him in whom the Holy Spirit dwells—of his earthliness and forwardness—of the opposition which is given by the corruption of his nature to the work of the Spirit—and of the patience, long-suffering, and kindness of the Divine guest, we may well be astonished at his condescension.

The nature of his work as a Comforter, implies and requires the tenderness of love and compassion. Benevolence aims at the relief of the oppressed, and longs to let the captive go free ; but to refresh the minds of weary pilgrims—to fill them with all peace and joy in believing, and to cause them, under all outward trials and discom-

forts, to abound in hope—this is the fruit of sincere love. The love of the Spirit is compared, as to its tenderness and invincible perseverance, to the love of a mother. “As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you,” Isa. lxvi. 13. So the great Comforter, amid all the frowardness and infirmities of believers, and under all their weakness and discouragements, continues to console, support, and cheer them.

II. The Holy Spirit comforts believers with invincible power and efficacy. This is necessary to meet the exigencies of the church in the wilderness. She has often been brought very low through outward distresses and internal divisions; and frequently has she been brought into a state of trial and despondency when she required to be addressed efficaciously in the words of the prophet: “Fear not: for thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.—In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment: but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.—For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord, that hath mercy on thee,” Isaiah, liv. 4—10.

The mourner in Zion is sometimes afflicted and tossed by tempests, the causes of which are hid from the world; and it is he alone who heals the broken hearted, who can speak with power and effect, so as to give comfort. He dwells in their souls as in his temple, and there diffuses the light, peace, and joy of heaven. He is in them a perpetual source of serenity and consolation: he is in them as “a well of water springing up unto everlasting life.” Their joy arising from this unfailing source is permanent; no man can take it from them. It is the Holy Spirit who brings with almighty power the promises of the word to their hearts, so that they find them to be “sweeter than honey, and the honeycomb.” If they are in heaviness through manifold trials and distresses, he enables them to look to the obedience, sacrifice, and ever-living intercession of their great Surety;

and to conclude that their interest in him shall never be dissolved; that “neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate them from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thus it is that while all the followers of Christ enter into heaven through much tribulation, they have a Comforter ever with them, who assures them that greater is he who is in them and with them, than all who can be against them. As often as they descend into the valley, and become fearful that they may never rise again, they hear a voice saying, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by thy name, thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee,” Isa. xliii. 1, 2. The great Comforter is ever with them, to adapt his consolations to their varying circumstances,—to their sorrows, fears, despondencies, and discouragements; to give relief with an efficacy proceeding from almighty power. “I, even I, am he that comforteth you: Who art thou that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?”—“Why sayest thou, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding. He giveth power to the faint; and to them that have no might he increaseth strength,” Isaiah xl. 27—31.

III. The Holy Spirit comforts believers with perpetual friendship: he abides with them for ever. The personal presence of the Saviour was to be enjoyed by the disciples but for a season: it was expedient and necessary that he should depart from them, and that the heavens should receive him until the restitution of all things. But his promise was, respecting the Comforter,

that he was to send unto them, that he should abide with them for ever, John, xiv. 16. This was in accordance with the declaration of Jehovah by the prophet Isaiah: "As for me this is my covenant with them, saith the Lord; my Spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever," Isaiah, lix. 21.

It is by the continual presence of the Holy Spirit as a Comforter with his church, that the Saviour fulfils his promise of being with his people always, even unto the end of the world. That the comforts of the Spirit are ever seasonable, and are ever given in the time of trouble, is the testimony of believers in every age. They all unite in saying with the apostles: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ." 2 Cor. i. 3—6. Amid all changes—amid the dissolution of the dearest friendships, when those whom we called our friends stand aloof from us,—he, the Comforter, abides with us in all the tenderness of his love, and in all the fulness of his grace, and the greatness of his mighty power. Whatever be the nature of our trials, temptations, or sorrows, his sympathy is ever the same; and his skill, compassion, and faithfulness never fail.

IV. The inhabitation of the Spirit in believers secures their comfort, inasmuch as it secures the application of the provisions of mercy, and precious promises of the new covenant. Hence the frequent reference in the New Testament to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the disciples of Christ. "He dwelleth in you, and shall be in you.—Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.—The Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in you.—The Holy Spirit dwelleth in us. What! know ye not

that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."*

The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is the source of all gracious operations in believers. He is in them "a well of water springing up unto everlasting life." John, iv. 14. It is by his inhabitation that the work of sanctification is carried on; that the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts; and that he bears witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. It is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers that creates the difference between them and the rest of the world. He is continually in them as that life which is hid with Christ in God,—that life which will issue in eternal glory. "The great difference between the two houses that Solomon built was, that God dwelt in the one, and he himself in the other. Though any two houses as to their outward fabric make the same appearance, yet, if the king dwell in the one, and a robber in the other; the one may be a palace, and the other a den. It is this inhabitation of the Spirit whereon all the privileges of believers do immediately depend, and all the advantages which they have above the men of the world. And the difference which is made hereby, or ensueth hereon, is so inconceivably great, as a sufficient reason may thence be given of all the excellent things which are spoken of them who are partakers of it."†

* John, xiv. 17; Rom. viii. 9; 1 Tim. iii. 14; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Owen on the Work of the Holy Spirit.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ANOINTING, THE SEALING, AND THE EARNEST OF
THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE unction, or anointing, which believers have by the Holy Spirit is mentioned in several passages of scripture. "Now he which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God, 2 Cor. i. 21. But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and know all things: the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you: and the same anointing teacheth you all things," 1 John, ii. 20, 27. This is a privilege peculiar to believers.

The Lord Jesus Christ who was typified in the anointed kings, priests, and prophets, of the old dispensations, was himself anointed by the extraordinary communication of the Spirit, Isa. lxi. 1. He was anointed by the Spirit at his incarnation, Luke i. 35: at his baptism, when the Holy Ghost descended upon him, and when he was solemnly inaugurated into his office, Matt. iii. 17: at his ascension, when he was anointed with the oil of gladness above all his precursors, and when being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he poured him forth on his disciples, Acts ii. 33.

Believers also have an unction from Christ, the Holy One. In what does this anointing consist? It is not the Spirit that anoints them; but they are anointed by the communication of the Holy Spirit from and by Jesus Christ: in consequence of which, two special privileges are enjoyed, namely, saving illumination in the great truths of the gospel, and a sacred consecration unto God. Hence, the apostle John says, "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.—The

anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and teacheth you all things," 1 John ii. 20. 27. This heavenly teaching is mentioned in several other parts of scripture, 1 Cor. ii. 14; Eph. i. 17, 18; John xiv. 26; xvi. 13. In consequence of this teaching the believer knows all things necessary to a life of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, all things necessary to his stability and perseverance unto the end. He has a spiritual discernment of the beauty and glory of the truth, and such delight and joy in it, that he can truly say, "Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever; for they are the rejoicing of my heart." *

The second privilege which believers enjoy in consequence of the anointing of the Holy Spirit is, their being separated and dedicated unto God. They are anointed as kings and priests unto him; and are thus raised to dignity and honour, and have uninterrupted access unto the holiest by the blood of Jesus. In proportion as they are assured of their exalted dignity, must they have joy of which the world knows nothing, whatever may be the troubles and the trials which they are called to endure.

The Holy Spirit also seals believers to the day of redemption. "In whom, also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise," Eph. iv. 30; i. 13; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22. In what does the sealing of the Holy Spirit consist? This question has usually been answered by a consideration of the two purposes for which sealing among men is used. It is used, first, to ratify and confirm deeds and testaments; and, secondly, for the safe-keeping of that upon which the seal is put. We may conceive in reference to the first application, a confirmation to our souls of the promises of God by the Holy Spirit. In reference to the second, we may conceive the exertion of the almighty power of the indwelling Spirit for the preservation of believers.

It appears to me, however, that the idea of sealing believers by the Holy Spirit, is, an evidencing to themselves and to the world that they are of God. Thus

* Psalm cxix. 111.

when the Jews said unto our Lord, "What sign dost thou, then, that we may see and believe thee? What dost thou work?" these were the questions which they asked in reply to the exhortation which Jesus had addressed to them,—“Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed,” John vi. 26—30. He had appended his seal, as it were, to his commission, and had so manifestly attested his Divine character as evidently showed that he was appointed to his office and work by God. He thus publicly owned him as his servant in whom he delighted:—as his “beloved Son in whom he is well pleased.” This testimony was repeatedly and audibly given; and Christ was declared to be the Son of God by the voice from heaven,—a testimony by which he was sealed. To him was given the fulness of the Spirit, and thus he was manifested and declared to be the Son of God.

In like manner, the sealing of believers is the communication of the Holy Spirit unto them; manifesting both to themselves and to others that they are accepted of God, and are separated and preserved unto life eternal. They are sealed with the Spirit, by whose gracious operations they are fitted for discharging the duties of the new relations into which they are brought. They have received from God not the spirit of fear, but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. They have received by the gift of the Holy Spirit, the testimony or the seal of God of their adoption into his family, Acts xv. 8, 9. “Hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he has given us,” 1 John iii. 24. “Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit,” 1 John iv. 13. As our being destitute of the Spirit of Jesus is the sure token of our being without Christ, so the possession of this heavenly gift forms the ground of our assurance that we stand in a near and dear relation to God as his children, Rom. viii. 9.

By this sealing with his Spirit, God manifests unto the world those that are his. By the gracious operations of the Spirit they are made to differ from others; and this

difference marks them out as the servants of God, and as the heirs of eternal life.

The Holy Spirit is also in them that believe an earnest. "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance," Eph. i. 13, 14. An earnest is a part given as a security for the possession of the whole. It is the Holy Spirit himself, and not any work of his wrought in us, that is the earnest or the pledge communicated for our comfort and assurance. The pledge is an assurance to believers, that the work of grace in them will be surely carried on until completed in the day of Jesus Christ; and that God will not fail to bestow on them all the blessedness which he has promised. The whole inheritance will in due time be given to them, because God has already conferred on them the earnest and the pledge of it. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ." *

As children of God, they are heirs of the rich and glorious inheritance which he has in reserve for them—an inheritance which they have neither earned nor merited, but which is bestowed through the riches of God's grace, and his exceeding kindness toward them in Christ Jesus. United to Him to whom the whole inheritance belongs—having his Spirit in them as the earnest and the pledge of their union to him—they become joint-heirs with him, and participate with him in his kingdom. The full inheritance of grace and glory is thus assured to them by an indubitable earnest and pledge. Between them and the full possession there are many trials and sorrows; there is death, and there is the corruption of the grave. But as the communication of the Spirit seals believers unto the day of the redemption of the body, so the Spirit is the earnest of an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away—reserved in heaven for them who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. †

* Rom. viii. 14—17.

† 1 Pet. i. 4, 5.

CHAPTER V.

RULES ACCORDING TO WHICH WE MAY EXPECT THE
MINISTRATION OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THOUGH the Holy Spirit is freely given, it may be permitted us humbly to ask what are the circumstances in which, according to the statements of the oracles of God, we may expect his communications. In attempting to enumerate some of these circumstances, I shall strictly adhere to those which are pointed out in the scripture.

I. A sense of our spiritual poverty is connected with the communication of the Holy Spirit. Though man cannot prepare himself for the reception of grace, and can neither deserve nor truly desire it, he may be deeply sensible of his sin and wretchedness. He may, and he ought, to feel his weakness, helplessness, and misery, as a sinner; and he may, under the impression of his guilt, send up an imploring petition to Him who hears the ravens when they cry unto him. But, alas! how little of this sense of our need of the Spirit, and of our mourning for his absence, is to be found among us! While we are without spiritual life and strength, we seem to feel not, and to mourn not, the absence of the Spirit. How few appear to regret the matter! How few, sensible of the loss they sustain, cry with earnestness of heart, "Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved!"

There is a connexion between the inhabitation of the Spirit, and lowliness of heart,—between a deep sense of our great unworthiness, and the enlightening and life-giving presence of the Holy Spirit. It was when the centurion gave utterance to the feelings of his heart, and

said, "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under my roof," that Jesus said, "Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee." * To the question, "Will God in very deed dwell with man on the earth?" the answer is, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: but to that man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembleth at my word." † To the humble and self-abased, who are amazed at the Divine forbearance and condescension, and who pant after the influences of the blessed Spirit, God looks with loving-kindness and tender mercy. For, "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." ‡

II. A high valuation of Divine influence is connected with the communication of the Spirit. Those who undervalue this, seek it not, and have no disposition to receive it. On the other hand, those who are under the life-giving power of the Spirit of God, find the Word, and all the means through which the Spirit operates, unspeakably precious to them; better in their estimation than thousands of gold and silver, *Psa. cxix. 72*. They entertain a very high estimate of the things of the Spirit; and, under this abiding sense, they say, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from us." "Lord, whatever thou dost with me, let me have much of the Spirit. Though I be poor, though I be miserable, though I be pinched with straits and wants all my days, though I be exposed to wanderings, let me have thy Spirit: take away anything from me, withhold anything, rather than thy Spirit." §

Hence the earnest desire, and the vehement longing for the light and power of the Holy Spirit, by all believers, more especially when they are in a lively and spiritual frame of mind. They can fully sympathize with the ardent expressions of him who said, "As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?" ||

* *Matt. viii. 8—12.*

† *Isa. lxvi. 1, 2.*

‡ *James, iv. 6.*

§ *Howe on the Work of the Holy Spirit.*

|| *Psalm, xlii. 1, 2.*

This is to hunger and thirst after righteousness,—after spiritual and Divine influence; and our Lord has promised that all such shall be filled.* A connexion is thus graciously established between earnestly desiring the Holy Spirit, and the possession of the gift,—between the expressions of the soul in seeking, asking, and knocking, and receiving, and finding. In regard to other things, no such connexion exists. A man may desire to be rich, learned, and exalted in worldly rank and honour, and never attain to riches, to learning, or to an elevated position among men. But rich and sovereign grace has revealed, for the encouragement of fallen man, a fixed connexion between the earnest desire for the Spirit of life and holiness in Christ Jesus, and the enjoyment of the gift desired. How impressively does our Lord teach us this when he says, “If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? Or, if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or, if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” Luke xi. 11—14.

III. A depending upon, and yielding ourselves unto, the Divine influence, are connected with the communication of the Spirit. When we turn away from all human resources, and wait only upon God for salvation, and look to him with an expecting eye, we shall not be disappointed. For “they that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, and they shall walk and not faint.” † If at any time we should imagine that our mountain stands strong, and that we shall do much in our own strength, we shall be allowed to learn from experience that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; and that all our sufficiency for what is truly good, must come to us from God. ‡ If we cherish a sense of our dependence on the Holy Spirit, and yield ourselves to his

* Matt. v. 6.

† Isa. xl. 31.

‡ 2 Cor. iii. 5.

governing power, he will dwell in us, and abide with us. If we yield ourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead, we shall be of the number of those of whom it is said, "that they are led by the Spirit of God." *

What is our object in desiring the Holy Spirit? Is it that we may be more instrumental in promoting the Divine honour and glory? Are the heavenly influences desired merely for our own enjoyment, and not with a view to the greater purification of our nature, and to our becoming more able to serve God in holiness and righteousness? If we seek them from God, that we may thereby have greater devotedness to God, we shall not be disappointed. He will grant us his Holy Spirit, that we may live to him, and for him. Our experience will accord with his who said, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." †

To these observations I have only to add—

IV. That earnest and persevering prayer is connected with the communication of the Holy Spirit. It is remarkable how great stress is laid in scripture on this connexion, and how frequently it is alluded to. The people of God are represented as in earnest and persevering prayer, seeking God, looking for him, searching and waiting for him, and calling after him. "Then shall ye call on me, and I will hearken unto you; and ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain." ‡ God condescends to enjoin his people to ask from him the greatest blessings, and even to *command* him, in earnest prayer, to bestow them. "Thus saith the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, and his Maker, Ask of me things to come, concerning my sons, and concerning the work of my hands, command ye me. Prove me now, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a

* Rom. viii. 14.

† Gal. ii. 20.

‡ Jerem. xxix. 10—14; Isa. xlv. 19.

blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”†

Thus, not only is the connection established between earnest and persevering prayer and the communication of the Spirit, but every encouragement is given to believe, that the blessing prayed for shall be granted. The Hearer of prayer assures us that he will not disregard the prayer of his people; that while they call upon him, he will answer them. “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I, the Lord, will hear them; I, the God of Israel, will not forsake them; I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the vallies; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.”†

This highly figurative representation of the people of God earnestly desiring heavenly and living influences, teaches us the readiness with which God attends to the cry of the truly penitent. They are here presented to our view as in a wilderness in which there is no water; as feeling their own emptiness and necessities, and thirsting for the needed supplies which God promised to give. He directs them to inquire of him by earnest prayer; and assures them that he is only waiting for an opportunity to bestow the gift of his Spirit. “Therefore will the Lord wait that he may be gracious unto thee; and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment. Blessed are all they that wait for him.”‡

* Malach. iii. 10. † Isa. xli. 17—19. ‡ Isa. xxx. 18, 19.

CHAPTER VI.

GRIEVING THE HOLY SPIRIT: QUENCHING THE SPIRIT.

WHEN believers are commanded not to grieve the Holy Spirit,* we are to understand the passage as representing God as speaking after the manner of men. A parent is grieved when his son, after everything has been done for him, acts in an unbecoming manner. Those alone who love us are grieved when we act differently from their wishes and expectations. Others may be vexed and provoked when we do wrong; "a severe schoolmaster may be more irritated by the fault of his scholar than a father;" but those only who love us are affected with grief when we act unbecomingly. Hence the compassion and tenderness of the Holy Spirit towards us, and the delight with which he performs his gracious office as the Sanctifier and Comforter. How amazing his patience in continuing to comfort those who are prone to grieve him! What, in particular, are the sins by which he is grieved?

As the Spirit of truth, he is grieved when men disregard the truth; and when they set at nought what he has revealed. This is only done by impenitent and unbelieving men: but if our Lord wept over Jerusalem, because its inhabitants knew not the time of their visitation, we may suppose that the Holy Spirit is grieved when, through the hardness of their hearts, men act lightly towards the truth which he has revealed.

As the Spirit of grace (Heb. x. 29), he is grieved when the gospel of the grace of God is despised and rejected. It is his office to apply the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to the souls of men, however undeserving; and by his

* Eph. iv. 30.

gracious operation to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God. But how is he grieved when men shut their eyes to the light, and their ears to the truth ; and obstinately choose the way that leads to destruction ! They despise the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering.

As the Spirit of faith, he is grieved by the unbelief of men, and more especially by the tendency to unbelief in those in whom he dwells. -As for the world that lies in the wicked one, it is impenitent and unbelieving. But how much is unbelief the besetting sin of those who know the truth, and who love the Saviour ! Alas ! how little do we live under the full belief of all that the Lord has spoken to us in his word ! Have we not need to apply the exhortation, to lay aside this sin that so easily besets us, and to run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus ?

As the Spirit of repentance (Zech. xii. 10.), the Holy Spirit is grieved when men harden their hearts under the affecting representations of the gospel. Thus it was with our Lord when he came nigh to the city and wept over it, and said, " If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace ; but now they are hid from thine eyes," Luke xix. 42. How greatly is the conduct of believers fitted to grieve the Holy Spirit when they yield to tempers and practices that deaden the holy sensibilities of their hearts, and assimilate them to this evil world !

As the Spirit of love, the Holy Spirit is grieved when the love of believers waxes cold. I know not any sin by which they give greater offence to the Spirit of God, than by the manifestations of affections opposed to love. In order to have relish for the milk of the word, and the influences of the Spirit, we must lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and evil speakings. Accordingly, when the apostle has commanded believers not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption, he immediately adds, " Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice ; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving

one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you," Eph. iv. 30—32.

Were I required to fix on any particular sin in the present day, which more than any other has grieved the Spirit of God, and caused him partially to withhold his gracious influence, I would mention the absence of love from the household of God. If, according to the declaration of our Lord, love is to be the characteristic mark of discipleship, and the visible bond of union among all the followers of Christ, how sadly has the church fallen, and how low has it become! Wherever we look, we behold, not the union of a close and compact brotherhood among all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, but divisions and distractions, strife and envyings. This affords manifest proof that the Holy Spirit is grieved, and that he has in sorrow partially and for a season withdrawn. Let the cry of the whole church of Christ be, Return, O Holy Spirit of life, and love, and power; and heal our divisions, love us freely, and receive us graciously. "Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts; look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine; and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. Turn us again, O Lord God of hosts; cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved." *

As the Spirit of life, the Holy Spirit is grieved with the lukewarmness and deadness of the professing people of God, Rev. iii. 15. Lukewarmness was the sin which brought down spiritual judgments on the church of Laodicea. That church had fallen from its primitive faith and obedience, was cold and secure in her condition, and yet was so insensible of it, that she supposed herself to be in a flourishing state. She imagined that she was rich, and increased with goods, and had need of nothing, while she was wretched and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. How many churches are in this sad and melancholy condition! Like Ephraim, when gray hairs were sprinkled upon him, and he knew it not, (Hos. vii. 9), who was in a declining state without being

* Psalm lxxx. 14—19.

aware of it, many of the professing people of God, in the present day, are in a state of spiritual lethargy and backsliding. It is with little effect that they are called upon to remember from whence they are fallen, and to repent, and earnestly seek to be restored to their first love ; they think not that this call is applicable to them ; they fondly flatter themselves that they are rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. The proofs of this sad decline are manifest throughout the Christian church ;—in the pride, selfishness, worldliness, and vanity that abound ;—in the absence of that deep humility which would lead us to implore a recovery ;—in the want of spirituality and spiritual appetite for the unadulterated milk of the word ; and in the spirit of contention and acrimony which prevails in all sections of the church. Is not this a proof of a great and grievous backsliding ?

As the Spirit of holiness, the Holy Spirit is grieved when the people of God do not depart from all sin, and follow after holiness. When they are not, in every case, fully complying with that grace that has brought salvation unto them, and that teaches men to deny all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world ;—they grieve the Holy Spirit of God.

As the Spirit of peace, meekness, and union, he is grieved by strife, acrimony, and division.

And as the Spirit of supplications, he is grieved when prayer is restrained.

Believers ought to be deeply affected by the consideration of their unkindness in thus grieving the Holy Spirit of God. His compassion and tenderness towards them demand love and obedience in return. But when, in place of these, they attend to duties with an unwilling mind, and withstand him, as it were, in his proper office, how sadly have they fallen ! They forget the signal mercies they have received from him, and that they have been sealed by him, by his indwelling in them ; and they are thus guilty of ingratitude to the Holy Spirit of God. If this be persisted in, he may in anger and displeasure partially withhold his influences, so that the means of

grace have not their wonted efficacy, and his chastisements cease to improve them.

May the Spirit of love and life in Christ Jesus deliver us from so fearful a condition! May we be enabled to pursue that universal holiness without which we cannot see the Lord! How unworthy and ungrateful is it in us to grieve Him whose object in coming to us is to give us consolation! "The Holy Ghost in his infinite love and kindness towards me, hath condescended to be my comforter; he doth it willingly, freely, powerfully: what have I received from him? In the multitude of my perplexities how hath he refreshed my soul? Can I live one day without his consolations? And shall I be regardless of him in that wherein he is concerned? Shall I grieve him by negligence, sin, and folly? Shall not his love constrain me to walk before him to all well-pleasing?" *

"Quench not the Spirit." † What are we to understand by these words? Some would expound them as referring to the gifts of the Spirit, the exercise of which in themselves, or in others, should not be hindered, 1 Tim. iv. 14; 1 Cor. xiv. 39.

In this interpretation I do not acquiesce: for though the gifts of the Spirit may be included in the exhortation, the words chiefly relate to his gracious influences in the hearts of believers. There is an allusion to the fire that was always kept alive on the altar, which typified the Holy Ghost. Accordingly, when he descended on the disciples on the day of Pentecost, there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, Acts ii. 3. When fire is extinguished by that which is opposite to its nature, water, it is quenched: and when the influences and operations of the Holy Spirit are opposed, the Spirit is said to be quenched. Convictions in the hearts and consciences of sinners are often finally extinguished. May not the flame of sacred love, and holy zeal, in believers be greatly damped by their sins, their evil tempers, their worldly cares and indulgences, and their conformity to the world? In place of giving themselves up to those

* Owen on Communion with the Holy Ghost.

† 1 Thes. v. 19.

spiritual affections which he awakens in their hearts, they resist them, and give place to opposite desires and feelings, and they thus quench the Holy Spirit.

In order that we may escape this evil, we must cherish the influences, and comply with the suggestions of the Spirit. It must be our daily study to make progress in a life of communion with God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. "What! know ye not, that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." *

The work of the Holy Spirit in our souls—the graces which he produces in our hearts—we shall carry with us to heaven: but everything that has a tendency to grieve the Spirit, and to quench the sacred flame which he has kindled, must be for ever left behind. If, then, it be our desire and our hope to dwell in the region of light and life, of purity and love, let us cherish the beginnings of these graces in our souls,—and let us not yield to those dispositions, or practices, by which we quench the Spirit. Especially let us guard against the strife and contention, the hatred and evil-speaking which are so offensive to him. "Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one toward another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." †

* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Eph. iv. 30—32.

CHAPTER VII.

THE AGENCY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN PRAYER :
ITS NATURE—ITS NECESSITY.

IN what respects, and to what extent, are we warranted to expect the Holy Spirit to assist us in prayer? That he is given to aid our devotions is expressly asserted in different passages of scripture, and more especially in the following,—“Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.” *

The help which the Spirit gives to believers under their infirmities has a special reference to prayer. He supplies their want of knowledge, and makes intercession for them with groanings which cannot be uttered. He also gives them filial confidence in God. “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son, crying, Abba, Father.” †

I. The Holy Spirit produces such a frame and disposition of heart in the children of God as lead them to exercise filial confidence in God as their Father. “Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again, to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.” ‡ Till they are brought from under the law, men are under the influence of a spirit of bondage unto fear. They do not draw near unto

* Rom. viii. 26, 27. † Gal. iv. 6; Rom. viii. 15. ‡ Rom. viii. 15.

God with the delight and confidence of children to a Father. They are under bondage, and they are therefore restrained in their approaches unto God.

But when, by the Holy Spirit, they are delivered from this bondage, their gracious affections are excited to love and delight; and with humble confidence, they now by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let their requests be made known unto God. They are enabled to pray in and by the Holy Spirit; and though their natural and acquired abilities and endowments should be inferior, they are, in the gift of prayer, far superior to those by whom they are despised. They experience the fulfilment of the promise, "I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication.

II. The Holy Spirit in prayer supplies the want of knowledge in believers. In what does their ignorance consist? First, they know not their spiritual wants. Secondly, they know not the temporal blessings they should pray for. Thirdly, they know not what is best for them. And, fourthly, they know not all the fulness of the promises of God. In all these respects they are ignorant, and know not what they should pray for as they ought.

First, they know not their spiritual wants. Believers, it is true, know that they are sinful, poor, miserable, blind, and naked; that they are weak, erring, and helpless: but "who can understand his errors?" Ps. xix. 12. Who can fully know the deceitfulness of the heart, which is desperately wicked? It is the Spirit of God that teaches those in whom he dwells, their numerous and great necessities, and also the grace and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is He, by his illuminations, who enables them to feel and know their wants, and encourages them to look to the Hearer of prayer to supply all their need according to the riches of his glory by Jesus Christ. How numerous are the blessings which they need, which the Holy Spirit only can teach them seasonably to ask!

Secondly, they know not the temporal blessings they should pray for. "For who knoweth what is good for

man in this life, all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow?" * All believers often experience a difficulty in praying aright about temporal things. When they are under affliction, or in straits and necessities, how do they know what to pray for? Parents are deeply interested in the welfare of their children,—in their temporal comfort; but how, and to what extent, are they to pray for their affairs in this life? How do they know but the want of those temporal benefits which they desire for them, would be conducive to their good and to the glory of God? How do they know that a certain portion which they wish for them would really contribute to their happiness? How much need have they of the teaching and direction of the Holy Spirit to enable them to manage their petitions at the throne of grace in a suitable manner!

Thirdly, we know not what is best for us. This is implied in the preceding observations. It may be necessary for the child of God to be in distress,—to be in heaviness through manifold temptations; "that the trial of their faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearance of Jesus Christ." † It is through much tribulation that we must enter into the kingdom of God: and how difficult, therefore, must it be for us to know at any particular period what is best for us, what would contribute to our spiritual and eternal good! We need the heavenly Teacher to direct us, and to enable us in this and in other things to make supplications according to the mind of God.

Fourthly, we know not all the fulness of the promises of God. Believers know, from scripture, that these promises are exceeding great and precious, and that in Christ Jesus they are all yea and amen. But they require to have increasing comprehension of the grace and mercy conveyed in them, so that they may see the suitableness of the supply to their wants, and find, from actual experience, that as their day is, so is their strength.

* Eccles. vi. 12.

† 1 Pet. i. 6, 7.

It is the Holy Spirit that directs the eye of faith to the promise which corresponds with the desire which he has awakened in the heart. It is he who gives the spiritual frame of mind which leads the believer to ask blessings of God, according to his will.

"The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us." How does he do so? Not without us: for the only Advocate with the Father is the Lord Jesus Christ, who ever liveth to make intercession for us; but the Holy Spirit is an intercessor in us and by us, enabling us to make our requests known unto God by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving. He produces in the minds of believers those desires and designs which God, who knoweth the mind of the Spirit, can understand, in all their extent. These they cannot fully, or, in adequate language express; they are breathed in groanings which cannot be uttered. How can the inward spiritual working of the heart and affections towards God be fully conveyed in words? How can the fervent aspirations of the new creature, under the immediate influence of the Holy Spirit, in prayer, be comprehended, except by Him who searcheth the hearts? He knows the inclination and earnest desire of the believer in prayer, under the power of the Spirit.

In this inward intercession of the Spirit in believers, as a Spirit of supplications, he communicates to their minds such clear and impressive views of the excellency, glory, and reality of the things revealed in the gospel, as deeply affect them, and which, in all their extent, are beyond their powers of utterance. It is thus that the Holy Spirit fills their minds with the matter of prayer, and teaches them what to pray for as they ought. It is thus that he directs their desires to the glory of God, and to the increase of holiness in themselves.

Real Christians know well, from experience, that there may be a discernment of the things to be prayed for, while the affections are cold, and even dead towards them. How is this evil remedied? It is by the inward working of the Holy Spirit, by which he influences effectually the will and affections towards spiritual things, and gives that relish for them which is termed a hungering

and thirsting after righteousness. He thus not only enables us to pray, by directing us to the mercies to be prayed for, but he gives us fervent desires, and heavenly affections, by which we are stirred up to seek after God, the living God, and are carried forth, as it were, in the exercise of faith and love towards him. He helps us on under our infirmities and weaknesses, and enables us, by his gracious interposition, as an intercessor within us, to plead our cause before God. The earnest desires which he produces, are sometimes of that depth and intensity, that they cannot be otherwise uttered than as humble, mournful groanings. He so enlightens the mind in the perception of the truth as it is in Jesus, in the discernment of the loveliness and excellency of spiritual things, and so enables the whole soul to make choice of them, and to delight in them, that there is "such an inward labouring of heart and spirit, such a holy supernatural desire and endeavour after a union with the things prayed for in the enjoyment of them, as no words can utter or expressly declare, that is, fully and completely."*

How solicitous should we be to have this heavenly frame of mind, this inward aid of the Spirit of grace and of supplications, in our approaches unto God! It is his special work to give us a delight in God, as the object of prayer, and as on a throne of grace. It is only when we have this spiritual frame of mind, and realising view of God, that we shall "come boldly to a throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." He who is a consuming fire, an object of dread and terror to unbelieving men, is in Christ Jesus, reconciling the world unto himself, and is ever ready to dispense grace and mercy to suppliant sinners. The Holy Spirit delivers such from the spirit of fear and bondage, and communicates the heavenly frame of heart by which they cry, Abba, Father. He enables them, by faith, to see God in Christ Jesus, on a throne of grace; and, as it were, to hear him saying unto them, "Fear not: I am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember thy sins. I will be

* Owen on the Due Manner of Prayer.

merciful to your unrighteousness, your sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

He gives also to believers to feel the relation in which God stands to them as their reconciled Father. They draw near to him with the affection of children, and with the soul-satisfying delight that "cannot be uttered," that the all-sufficient God is their Father; that, through Christ, they have access by one Spirit unto him as their Father. How great is the joy of those to whom the Holy Spirit reveals God as their God, and bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God! They have the confidence of being accepted of him, of being heard in their prayer; and hence their enlargement of soul, their liberty, their enjoyment. They are not afraid lest they weary their heavenly Father with the multitude of their supplications; for they are assured that they have continual access to God by Jesus Christ, and that he rejoices over them to do them good. They have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; and through the gracious working of the Holy Spirit helping them and carrying them forth, they draw near with true hearts, and in full assurance of faith. Unbelief in the readiness of God to supply our necessities, and in his unfailing condescension and compassion, is thus subdued; and in consequence of the inward revelation of the Spirit—a revelation of the love, and truth, and power of God, in the promises of the covenant—we have the liberty and the delight, and the humble confidence of children, in his presence.

I must not omit to notice, in conclusion, the operation of the Spirit in prayer in keeping the mind of the believer fixed on the one Mediator, who is the way to the Father. In this he glorifies Christ; while he shews us that, in coming to God in and through him, we cannot fail of a gracious acceptance; that by him we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. If, then, in prayer, our minds be spiritually intent upon the great Surety and Substitute of sinners, the Lord Jesus Christ; if we can lay our hand, by faith, on the atoning sacrifice, as the ground of our

hope and confidence—we owe it to the “Spirit of the Son,” helping our infirmities, and directing and furnishing us both as to the matter and the manner of prayer.

May not all true Christians take blame to themselves for not crying unto God in prayer more frequently and earnestly for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit? This is essentially necessary to personal progress in the Divine life, and to the revival and prosperity of the church, (Jerem. xxxi. 31—33; Ezek. xi. 17—19; xxxvi. 25—27.) Without the influence of the Holy Spirit, how feeble and powerless are all the efforts of man to plead the cause of God! With the Holy Spirit, even the worm Jacob can thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and make the hills as chaff. (Isa. xli. 15.) When the Holy Spirit is poured out from on high, the feeblest instruments are successful; the wilderness becomes as a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is counted as a forest. (Isa. xxxii. 15.)

CHAPTER VIII.

THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT: ORDINARY AND
EXTRAORDINARY.

BEFORE concluding this treatise on the work of the Holy Spirit, I must briefly advert to his agency in bearing witness to the sonship of the children of God. This, it is evident, from what the apostle says, (Rom. viii. 9—16.) is a privilege common to all believers,—and to be continued to the end of time. High is the rank to which they are raised; they are constituted the children of God: and the witnesses of the reality of this honour are, our own spirit, and the Spirit of God.

It is not greatly to be wondered at, that those who are by nature the children of Satan and of wrath, should have occasion sometimes to ask, are we really the children of God, and adopted into his family? Have we really such evidences as distinguish and establish our title to this exalted relation? Their spiritual adversaries may attempt to invalidate their evidences, and disannul their plea; but in the midst of the controversy, a person of admitted integrity and excellency appears, and gives such full and direct testimony in the matter as conclusively decides it. Before his testimony was heard, many flaws were found in the evidences; the truth of all of them was questioned; but the Comforter by his witnessing bears down all objections, and joins with our own spirits in vindicating our right and title. The dispute which, in some cases, he allows for a season to remain in suspense, so that the soul is filled with fear and dread about its inheritance, he puts an end to when he freely and effectually works. He stills the tumults

of the soul, and fills it with all joy and peace in believing.

The witnessing of the Holy Spirit does not consist in a new revelation from heaven. No signs from heaven, no new revelations are to be expected; and were we to conceive it possible, which it is not, for an angel of light to assure any one that he is a child of God, while the scriptures prove him to be a child of Satan, we could not hesitate to affirm, that the deluded person is, notwithstanding the voice which he supposes to have heard, on the road to destruction. It is by means of the truth, and in entire accordance with its dictates, that the Holy Spirit operates. All evidences adduced in proof of our adoption into the family of God must be tried by the law and the testimony,—the only infallible rule by which to judge of our position in relation to God and to eternity.

What, then, is meant by the ordinary witness of the Spirit? It consists chiefly in the evidence produced by the Holy Ghost of our adoption into the family of God: for, as all believers are the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, so, because they are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, crying, “Abba, Father.” Though we cannot explain the manner of his operation, any more than we can tell whence the wind comes, the effects of his operation, wherever these exist, cannot be concealed. In proportion as we have the marks of the children of God, as declared in scripture, and produced in us by the Holy Spirit, have we evidence of our being the children of God.

And what are these marks? “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God,” 1 John v. 1. But what is it to believe that Jesus is the Christ? Is it not, that we receive him as a Saviour, and rest in him alone for salvation? He that is born of God delights in the law of the Lord after the inner man, 1 John iii. 8. His character is thus described by the Holy Spirit: “Thou art my portion, O Lord; I have said that I would keep thy words. I entreated thy favour with my whole heart; be merciful unto me according to thy word. I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep

thy commandments," *Psa. cxix. 57—60*. The evidence of our love to God is, that we keep his commandments, *1 John, v. 3*. And also, that we love all our fellow-Christians. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. When we cherish benevolence to man, and love to all who bear the image of God, and love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, we bear a distinguishing mark of our filial relation to God. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God," *Matth. v. 9*. "If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons," *Heb. xii. 7*. If our afflictions, of whatever nature they may be, are sanctified to us, and if we are enabled to bear them with patience and resignation, we have evidence that we are the children of God. If to these scriptural marks we add, victory over the world, (*1 John, v. 4*;) and a growing conformity to the image of the Son of God, (*Rom. viii. 29*;) we have a summary of the leading features of the characters of those who are born again by the Holy Spirit.

It is He who produces in us, who are by nature the children of disobedience, the dispositions and the character of the children of God. It is He who translates us from the world, and from the kingdom of Satan, unto that of God's dear Son. It is He that takes away the heart of stone, and gives an heart of flesh,—that creates us anew in Christ Jesus after the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. It is He who impresses the image of Christ on the soul, and prepares it by his sanctifying operation for glorifying and enjoying God. It is He who communicates those gracious dispositions to the soul by which it is formed into a resemblance of the Divine nature.

But as we are prone to deceive ourselves, either by self-flattery, on the one hand, or self-diffidence on the other, we have need that God would search us and try us, and that, by the light of his Holy Spirit, he may discover his own work to us. "As Hagar in the wilderness did not see the fountain of water, though it was near her, till God opened her eyes, (*Gen. xxi. 19*;) so,

the springs of Divine life and holiness, which the Spirit of God has raised within our souls, are sometimes, as it were, hidden from the soul itself, till the Spirit show it to the believer by assisting his inquiring faculties, and shedding down a Divine light.”*

In what method, then, does the Holy Spirit generally bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God? Some persons, misled by the meaning which they attach to the word witness, have conceived that the witnessing of the Spirit consists in something said or spoken, and conveyed to the mind by an internal suggestion, or audible voice; not recollecting that the acception in which the term witness is here used, is to give evidence; and that evidence may be given as fully, powerfully, and conclusively, without articulate speech as with it. Thus it is said that God left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; that is, he gave evidence by those of his being, superintending providence, and goodness.† Had the witness of the Spirit been communicated by an audible voice, assuring the person to whom it was addressed of his regeneration and adoption, it might be imitated; and how could the imitation be distinguished from the reality? But given, as it is, by the production of the image of God on the soul, more especially of that filial love to him, the exercise of which affords evidence of a filial relation to God, it is the peculiar impress of heaven, a sign to them that believe which the Spirit of holiness alone can impart, whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption. The evidence thus exhibited by the Spirit of God, is recognised and declared by our consciousness; and in this way, ordinarily, he furnishes evidence to our own spirits, or minds, that we are the children of God.

The effects of the Spirit's operation and indwelling in us, are love to God, and some degree of filial confidence in him; by which it may be ascertained that we stand towards God in the endearing relation of children. The sense of guilt, and the dread of wrath, are removed by

* Watts's Works, v. ii. p. 298.

† Acts, xiv. 17.

faith in the blood of Christ; so that in place of being alienated in heart from God, and depressed by a fearful looking for of judgment, we are enabled to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement. When we can mark in the affections of supreme love to God, and delight in him,—of zeal for his glory, and regard to all who bear his image,—obedience to his commandments, and resignation to his appointments, the operation of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, have we not evidence that a good work has been begun in us, and, consequently, that we are the children of God? If we find in ourselves those graces and virtues which the Scriptures represent as peculiar to God's children, may we not say without arrogance or presumptuous confidence, "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.* He dwells in believers, and produces in them the principles of life and love, and the dispositions and the tempers of the children of God; by which they are distinguished from those in whom sin reigns, and who walk after the flesh. "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now, if any man have not the Spirit of Christ thus dwelling in him, he is none of his. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God."†

To them all Christ is very precious—the chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Love to God is shed abroad in the hearts that were estranged from him: his perfections and excellences are admired and adored; his favour is esteemed and sought after as life; his ordinances are valued as the appointed means of communing with him; his displeasure is dreaded as the greatest evil; and the light of his countenance is regarded as happiness. The disposition of mind which leads us to love God supremely, produces love to all who bear his image. While we disapprove of their errors and faults, we esteem themselves as the children of God and the disciples of Christ, and we love those features of their character which bear a resemblance to our Divine Lord,

* 1 John, iii. 24.

† Rom. viii. 9, 14.

These affections are not such as man naturally cherishes or exercises; and, wherever they exist, they are communicated by the Holy Spirit. If we love God, it is because he first loved us; and as the effect, created us anew in Christ Jesus. If we love the brethren, we have also the witness or evidence of the Spirit that we have passed from death unto life. If, with spirituality of mind, we rise in some happy measure above the world, and seek those things which are above, we are furnished with ground for believing, that we are not of the world, but have been chosen out of the world,—that our life is hid with Christ in God, and that when he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory. If there have been given to us a spirit of prayer in the exercise of which we follow hard after God—it is in consequence of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us as the spirit of adoption, leading us to cry, Abba, Father. In proportion as we abound in those fruits that proceed from living faith, have we scriptural evidence of our union to the Redeemer, and of our being heirs of eternal life. We have the testimony of our conscience, which in this case accords with the testimony of God, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have our conversation in the world.

How does the Holy Spirit work in enabling the soul to apply this evidence? By stirring it up to diligent self-examination. By giving occasion for the exercise of some graces in so clear a manner, that there can be no doubt of their heavenly origin. By showing from Scripture its interest in redeeming love and mercy; and by making it appear that the faith, the love, the repentance, and the obedience, which are in us, are truly unfeigned, sincere, and evangelical. Thus the Holy Spirit, by directing and aiding our judging faculties, enables us to compare our actual condition with the Divine word, and on good grounds, to come to the conclusion, that we are the children of God.

In addition to this, there is an extraordinary witness of the Spirit, which consists in such superior illumination, as enables the believer clearly to discern the work of grace in his soul;—in such large communications of

the love of God as exclude all doubt and fear from the mind, and fill it with all joy and peace in believing; and in such peculiar manifestations of the Divine presence and glory as elevate to heavenly enjoyment. "He that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself unto him. Judas saith unto him (not Iscariot), Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." *

The extraordinary witness of the Spirit is in some measure necessary, to enable us clearly to perceive the existence of that which is more common and ordinary; and hence the obligation of frequent and earnest prayer to God, not only for the sanctifying influences of his Spirit, but for his special illumination, to enable us to distinguish the fruits of his operation, that we may attain to the full assurance of hope. The Holy Spirit may give to the soul of a believer such an assurance of Divine love, such a discovery of his adoption into the redeemed family of God, without any particular examination at the time, as will fill it with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

That the Holy Spirit often acts in this manner as an extraordinary Comforter, and gives such communications of the love of God as fill the mind of the believer with the most delightful assurance of his adoption, is a fact accordant with Scripture, and attested by the experience of many eminently pious persons. "What I felt through the admirable bounty of my God, and the most pleasant comforting influence of the Holy Spirit, on October 22, 1704, far surpassed the most expressive words my thoughts can suggest. I then experienced an inexpressibly pleasant melting of heart, tears gushing out of mine eyes for joy that God should shed abroad his love abundantly through the hearts of men; and that for this very purpose my own heart should be so signally possessed of and by his blessed Spirit."

* John xiv. 21—24.

This was the experience of the celebrated John Howe, whose solid judgment and deep sagacity are universally admitted. The consolation of the Holy Spirit sometimes comes in "through all opposition," says Dr. Owen, "into the saddest and darkest condition imaginable. Whence is this? The Spirit works effectually, his power is in it; he will work, and none shall let him. If he will bring to our remembrance the promises of Christ for our consolation, neither Satan nor men, sin, nor the world, nor death shall interrupt our comfort. This, the saints who have communion with the Holy Ghost, know to their advantage." The joy which he communicates has caused men to sing in a dungeon, to rejoice in the flames, and to glory in tribulations; it has carried them through the deepest afflictions and distresses, and has given them to participate of the happiness of heaven at the time when they seemed to be fit objects for the commiseration of their fellow-men.

"There are two ways whereby the Spirit worketh this joy in the hearts of believers. First, he doth it immediately by himself, without the consideration of any other acts or works of his, or the interposition of any reasonings, or deductions and conclusions. He so sheds abroad the love of God in our hearts, and so fills them with gladness by an immediate act and operation. Of this joy there is no account to be given, but that the Spirit worketh it, when, and how he will,—prevailing against all fears and sorrows, filling it with gladness, exultations, and sometimes with unspeakable raptures of mind. Secondly, by his other works towards us. He gives a sense of the love of God, with our adoption and acceptance with him. These are the general consequences of the effects of the Holy Ghost upon the hearts of believers." *

Such special communications from the Holy Spirit are usually experienced when God calls his servants either to arduous and difficult services, or to great and uncommon sufferings. The history of the martyrs of Jesus Christ shows how much they were elevated by a sense

* Owen on Communion with the Holy Ghost, Works, v. x. p. 310.

of the love of God, and what unspeakable joy they had in the midst of tortures and death. Many have been favoured with the extraordinary witnessing and comforting power of the Holy Spirit before their departure from the world. Their joy has been such, that they have been raised far above the fear of death, and have been ready to begin the song of Moses and of the Lamb.

It has been asked, by way of objection, how are such special communications of the Spirit to be distinguished from the delusions of Satan, or the fancies of the human mind? Adhering to the infallible directory of God's word, we shall be able, in regard to this matter, to separate truth from error.

I. The communications and sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit, in every case, humble the soul before God. We have striking illustrations of this in Job, xlii. 4, 5; Isaiah, vi. 1—5; and Paul, Rom. vii. 23; 2 Cor. xii. 9—14. And we have also a striking illustration of the effect of delusion in puffing up the mind, in the case of Simon Magus, Acts viii. 9, 10.

II. The communications of the Spirit, however abundant, tend to make Christ, and all the doctrines of salvation, more precious to the soul. They have this tendency in consequence of their abasing us in our own eyes, and causing us to run for protection and for succour to the rich and sovereign grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thus it was with him who had extraordinary communications of the love of God, and who had been caught up into Paradise: he counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ his Lord, Phil. iii. 8. The cross of Christ was the sole object and ground of his glorying, Gal. vi. 14.

On the other hand, when persons have been under the influence of delusion, they have drawn away from Christ; they have embraced and endeavoured to propagate false opinions, altogether opposed to the gospel. In place of being confirmed in the belief of truths formerly professed, they have renounced them for errors.

Without expatiating on this subject, I may observe generally, that wherever the Spirit comes with his com-

forting and sanctifying influences, whether in an ordinary or extraordinary manner, he brings his fruits into the soul, which are, love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Satan, no doubt, may transform himself into an angel of light; but God has so ordered it, that a careful examination of his appearance by the light of the Divine word, will enable us to detect him, and to distinguish his operations. The communications of the Spirit draw the heart away from sin to God, and lead to deep concern and watchful care to please him; but the delusions of Satan, and the presumptions of a warm imagination, have a contrary tendency.

It may be proper to caution humble Christians who are walking with God, and are observing all his ordinances and commandments, not to be discouraged, though they have not experienced the same abundant communications that have been bestowed upon many of the people of God. It is the privilege of all God's children to have the Holy Spirit abiding in them as a Comforter and a Sanctifier; and to have access through Jesus Christ, by one Spirit, unto the Father. But in order to attain to the full assurance of God's love, and of our personal salvation, we must follow the Lord fully by waiting on him in all the ordinances of his grace. In order to have increasing discoveries of the power and glory of God, let us study to grow in grace; to "lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." *

In order to enjoy the continued witness of the Spirit, it is necessary, first, that we live by the faith of the Son of God; that he be daily the object of our faith and confidence, and the ground upon which we rest our hopes

* 2 Pet. i 10, 11.

for eternity. Secondly, that we deny ourselves daily, take up our cross, and follow the Redeemer. The peculiar joys of the gospel are possessed only by those who count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Thirdly, that we have regard to all God's commandments. We must study to maintain a tender conscience. And, fourthly, we are to continue instant in prayer.

THE END.

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